HISTORY OF PURNEA

(C 1722 - 1793)

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The district of Purnea with an area of 4,259 square miles and population of 3,089,128 as published in the *Bihar Statistical Handbook* of 1970*, is doubly a border district, abutting to the north on the Nepal Terai as it does to the east on the Bengal districts of Jalpaiguri, Dinajpur and Maldah. The river Ganges separates it from the districts of the Santal Parganas and Bhagalpur on the south. The district of Saharsa is on its west. Situated between 25° 15' and 26° 35' north latitude and between 82° 02' and 88° 35' east longitude and forming a part of newly created Kosi Division, Purnea is roughly a square in shape of which the side is about sixty-five miles. The district was considered a valuable prize during the Mohammadan period and as a 'frontier military province'[1], it commanded enough attention from the provincial rulers of Bengal throughout its history.

The years 1722 and 1793 are of special significance in the history of Purnea. The authentic history of Purnea commences with the Mohammadans. The district fell into the hands of the Mohammadans as early as in the thirteenth century, but it attained opulence and prosperity only in the time of its great Faujdar, Saif Khan.[2] It was also during Saif Khan's regime that large tracts from neighbouring territories were annexed to Purnea and the district received immense economic viability. Saif Khan became the Faujdar of Purnea in the year 1722 and, therefore, the said year is a landmark in the history of Purnea.

The year 1793 saw the coming in of the Permanent Settlement which was a culmination of the British administrative experiments in Bengal spread over about a quarter of a century and through which the British sought to effect a system that

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* *Bihar Statistical Handbook*, Patna (1970), p. 6.

1 Firminger, W. K. *The Fifth Report*, Vol. I, Calcutta (1917), p. 409.

2 Salim, Ghulam Hussain. *Riyaz-us-Salatin*, Calcutta (1902), p. 36.

could ensure for them a regular inflow of revenue and also create a class of people upon whose loyalty they could count. The British succeeded in their aim and a class of zamindars, loyal to the British, came to occupy central position in the subsequent socio-economic setup of the district. But the British, as will be shown later, failed in their avowed mission 'to protect the cultivators from the exactions of the zamindars'.[1] They also failed to provide a dependable administrative system. The fact, however, remains that the administrative shape that Purnea acquired over the years since 1793, is a superstructure on the experiments mentioned above. The year 1793 also, therefore, is a landmark in the history of Purnea.

Between 1722 and 1793 Purnea witnessed extremely painful changes in political setup which necessarily led to economic exploitation of the people. The prosperity of the days of Saif Khan continued only for a brief period. Under the mild government of Saiyad Ahmad Khan, who was Faujdar of Purnea, between 1749-56, Purnea enjoyed peace and progress, but soon his son and successor Shaukat Jang implicated the people and property of Purnea in a futile and ultimately disastrous struggle with the Subadar of Bengal. With that ensued a period of unabated exploitation of the people at the hands of greedy and unprincipled Faujdars, who ruled over the district between 1757 and 1770. The economic degeneration during this period was mainly due to the fact that the Faujdars owed their position as such to the Subadars of Bengal. In order to enjoy an undisturbed tenure, the Faujdars paid heavy sums to the Subadars, obviously the people of the district, in the process, were financially squeezed to the maximum. The people of Purnea, 'courteous, docile and orderly' as they are reputed to have been[2], never protested against these excesses. On the contrary rather unashamedly submitted to them. Ghulam Hussain is true when he remarks,

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[1] Baden-Powell, B. H. *The Land System of British India*, Vol. I. Oxford, (1892), p. 392.

[2] Cooke, H. G. Cameos of Indian Districts (Purnea-Bengal), *The Calcutta Review*, Vol. LXXXVIII, April 1889, Calcutta.

> 'The inhabitants of Purnea are exactly the counterpart of Bengal, those tame, cowardly wretches, at all times so crouching and so ready to submit to anyone that offers.'[1]

The object of the present work is to examine how these two factors, namely the exploitation by the greedy and unscrupulous Faujdars of Purnea and the tendency of the people of Purnea to submit to oppressions, impoverished the district.

H. G. Cooke, Collector of Purnea, wrote in 1889,

> 'The physical formation of Purnea is such that it can face periods of scarcity with greater confidence than more wealthy districts, though it may be described as level throughout, boasting of one hill about 250 feet high, this level is really diversified by old river beds and other depressions, which are so numerous as to be classified as lowlands, as distinguished from the somewhat higher lands around. In years of drought these lands may be relied on for a crop, and though they suffer in years of heavy rains, as they form catchment basins, in such years the highlands bear a good crop, so that whether there be too much rain or too little, some portion of the lands bear produce.'[2]

What Cooke wrote in 1889, was true about Purnea in all times, the physical features of the district remaining the same. Nevertheless, it is during the post-Plassey period only that time and again we hear of scarcities in the district. The Great Bengal Famine of 1770 took a heavy toll of human life in Purnea. This event together with the epidemics and usurpations that followed cast a shadow over the land and people of the district, which did not lift many years onwards. It was also in the year 1770 that the first English Supervisor was posted in

[1] Khan, Ghulam Hussain. *Sair-ul-Mutakharin*, Vol. II. Calcutta, R. Cambray and Co. (1902), p. 251.

[2] Cooke, H. G. Cameos of Indian Districts (Purnea-Bengal), *The Calcutta Review* Vol. LXXXVIII, April 1889, Calcutta.

Purnea and it must be said, in all fairness, that he did his best to give relief to the famished people. But the question to be examined here is whether anything was done with any amount of success to evolve a permanent machinery that might act as a bulwark against similar catastrophes in future.

Recovery from the famine was slow. But other deeper and more fundamental problems troubled the land. The words of Tarasankar Banerjee about Bengal in the eighteenth century are remarkable. He writes,

> 'The history of Bengal in the eighteenth century is a record of transition from the old order to the new—a process that ultimately affected the whole course of Indian history in general. In the 18th century, Bengal stood between two momentous changes. On the one hand, it witnessed the disappearance of the traditional country force and on the other, it saw the emergence of a new force—an alien one—that engulfed the whole subcontinent in the long run. In a sense it stood at a critical juncture of Indian history and symbolised the high and low watermarks of it.'[1]

The history of Purnea in the eighteenth century very much falls in line with this general trend of the history of Bengal. Purnea district in the midst of a gradual but painful transition from the traditional to the modern world, partially suffered the burdens of both and fully enjoyed the benefits of neither. The declining old order showed many signs of paralysis, stagnation, and decay. The rising new age would not reach Purnea even many years after the advent of the British. What is sought to be examined here, is the changing pattern in the society as a result of British experiments in the administrative setup.

While examining the above aspects of the history of Purnea, it is also desirable to give a chronological narrative of the

[1] Sen, S. P. (Editor). *Studies in Modern Indian History*, Calcutta (1969), p. 168.

happenings between 1722 and 1793 in the district, as only that can help in proper understanding of the problems that plagued Purnea during the period. It is a matter of regret that an important district like Purnea should be without any record of the past. In the words of W. W. Hunter,

> 'Districts that have furnished the sites of famous battles, or lain upon the routes of imperial progresses, appear, indeed, for a moment in the general records of the country, but before the eye has become familiar with their uncouth names, the narrative passes on, and they are forgotten. Nor are the inhabitants themselves very much better acquainted with the history of the country in which they live. Each field, indeed has its own annals... But the bygone joys and sorrows of the district in general, its memorable vicissitudes, its remarkable men, the decline of old forms of industry and the rise of new, in a word, all the weightier matters of rural history, are forgotten.'[1] An attempt to construct the history of Purnea district, however, inadequate, may perhaps be welcome.

The object of the present work, in short, is writing a history of Purnea district between 1722 and 1793 in such a way as may explain the interaction of political and economic factors in shaping the destiny of the people of the region.

The work has been divided into eight chapters, including the present one. The chapters are as follows :

(*i*) Introduction
(*ii*) Historical Background
(*iii*) Era of Territorial Acquisitions
(*iv*) Period of Consolidation
(*v*) Interregnum
(*vi*) Era of Decay

[1] Hunter, W. W. *The Annals of Rural Bengal*, Calcutta (1965), p. 10.

(*vii*) Age of Administrative Experiments

(*viii*) Summary and Conclusion

The second chapter is an attempt to construct the history of Purnea before 1722 to provide a connected narrative leading up to the advent of Saif Khan. The third chapter traces the work done by Saif Khan during whose regime the district of Purnea acquired new territorial dimensions. The fourth chapter narrates the events of Saiyad Ahmad Khan's administration when the good work done by Saif Khan was consolidated and the district prospered. The fifth chapter deals with the inter-regnum separating the period of opulence and peace that marked the administrations of Saif Khan and Saiyad Ahmad Khan on the one hand and the period of decay that was the distinguish-rig feature of Purnea during the years after the Battle of Baldia-bari in 1757. With this battle began the process of unabated decay and the sixth chapter depicts how the land and people in Purnea suffered at the hands of weak and unprincipled Faujdars who plundered them to satisfy the demands of the provincial rulers. The latter after the said battle acquired an exceedingly tightening control over the Faujdars of Purnea. The seventh chapter describes the condition in which the British took over the administration of the district. When they came, there was hardly any administrative machinery; they made attempts to evolve one. An assessment of these attempts forms the subject-matter of this chapter. The last chapter contains summary and conclusion.

The present study is based mostly on archival materials preserved in the West Bengal State Archives, Calcutta as also in the Central Records Office, Bihar Government Secretariat, Patna. The manuscript volumes of Purnea District Records : 1784-1793 contain useful information concerning the conditions during the period in Purnea. The proceedings of the Controlling Council of Revenue, Murshidabad in 12 manuscript volumes, containing consultations from 27th September, 1770 to 8th September, 1772, are some of the oldest records in the Bengal Secretariat Records Room. Fortunately the printed copies of these are now available. A good deal of materials regarding

Purnea are available in those volumes and full use of them have been made. The manuscript records preserved in the West Bengal State Archives under the series, Proceedings of the Committee of Revenue for the period 1782-1784, Proceedings of the Board of Revenue for the period 1787-1807 and those preserved in the State Central Records Office, Patna, under the series 'Purnea District Records' for the period 1784-1793 have been of great help in preparing this history. Apart from these, two contemporary Persian works, namely *Sair-ul-Mutakharin* by Saiyad Ghulam Hussain Khan and *Riyaz-us-Salatin* by Ghulam Hussain Salim, are storehouses of valuable historical details with many useful information respecting the rulers as well as the land and the people of Purnea. Saiyad Ghulam Hussain Khan was a man of fair education, and was thoroughly acquainted with the history of this time. Since he was employed as tutor to Shaukat Jang, the Faujdar of Purnea, and lived in Purnea for about seven years between 1749 and 1756, his history is based on personal observation and experience. Standard published works of history of somewhat general nature have contributed no less in constructing the chronological narrative of Purnea district.

The materials have been collected mostly from the State Archives, West Bengal ; Central Records Room, Bihar Government Secretariat, Patna ; National Library, Calcutta ; Darbhanga Raj Library, Darbhanga ; Bhagalpur University Library ; T. N. B. College Library, Bhagalpur ; the Bairolia Library, C. M. College, Darbhanga ; Purnea College Library, Purnea ; S. P. College Library, Dumka and the Collectorate Library, Purnea.

CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

CLAIMS TO ANTIQUITY

Previous to entering on history of Purnea between 1722 and 1793, it becomes requisite to briefly trace the history of the district in earlier times. The inhabitants of Purnea, particularly the Hindus have some claims to antiquity and early civilization, but we have not any authentic information respecting them during the early ages of their progress.

> 'The natives of this district have less curiosity concerning the transactions of men in former times than any people with whom I have ever met.'[1]

These words of Francis Buchanan, who toured and surveyed the district of Purnea in 1809-1810 is true about the people of Purnea to a very great extent. The result is that no accounts of the bygone days of Purnea, however inadequate, are available.

So obscure is the history of Purnea in ancient times that J. Byrne has just the following to say about early history of Purnea district,

> 'Unlike Tirhut, Purnea has no claims to have come into prominence during the Aryan period. In the map of Aryavarta (Ancient Aryan India) as conceived by Sanskrit scholars, the north-western portion of Purnea was known as the land of Kirats, who were non-aryans. The preponderance of the Mongloid population in the district to the present day lends some support to this view. The northern portion was included in the kingdom of Nepal while the remainder was included in Poundra—Vardhan within the kingdom of Gaur.

[1] Buchanan, Francis. *An Account of the District of Purnea in 1809-1810*, Patna (1928), p. 42.

> The famous Chinese traveller Hiuen Tsiang visited Kankjol on the other side of the Ganges in 639 A.D. and after crossing the Ganges travelled some 100 miles and reached the kingdom of "Pun-na-fa-tan-na" or Poundra Vardhan. Hiuen Tsiang estimated the circuit of the kingdom at 667 square miles, which covered the tract of country bounded on the west by the Mahananda, on the east by Tista and the Brahmaputra and on the south by the Ganges.'[1]

A number of places containing remains of ancient forts and other similar constructions are found at many places in the district. Purnea has some claim to antiquity on their basis but all these ancient relics are associated with any number of myths. It is impossible to unravel these tangled web of Hindu and aboriginal myths. The ruins of an old fort called Satligarh or Sikligarh situated in a village named Dharara in the extreme west of the district, contain a monolith called Maniktham.[2] The local traditions assert that this was the place of the Mahabharat episode of Sivaic Hiranyakashipu attempting slaughter of his son Prahlad on account of his devotion to the worship of Vishnu. Immediately under the monolith was found a coin of Indo-Suythic character with a Sivaic emblem on the reverse. It is attributed to king Vasudeva, who ruled in second century A.D. In the absence of corroborative evidence, however, nothing certain can be said in this connection. Benugarh, Barijangarh and Asuragarh are the ruined forts situated in the Kishanganj Sub-Division and attributed to three brothers, Benu, Barijan and Asur. Nanha and Kanha were the fourth and fifth brothers who likewise built a fort each but now there is no trace of them available. It is said that the five brothers lived in the Vikramaditya period, and that the forts were all built in a night.[3]

[1] *Byrne, J. Final Report on the Survey & Settlement Operations in the District of Purnea*, Calcutta (1908), p. 3.

[2] Buchanan, Francis. *An Account of the District of Purnea in 1809-1810*, Patna (1928), p. 69.

[3] ————, Patna (1928), p. 42.

The village Thakurganj in the Kishanganj Sub-Division is said to have been the site of Raja Virat, whose territory lay on the east of the River Kosi, and who is credited to have given shelter to Pandavas during their exile. There are few other sites which are associated with different myths of similar nature. But in the words of W. W. Hunter,

> 'They do not form even a semblance of a connected narrative. We can only observe that the fundamental ideas on which they are based and the personages with whom they deal, are derived from the Kiranti peoples who lived to the east and north of the Kusi and Karatoya. The stories relate, for the most part, the struggle and conquests of Kirat, Kichak, and other petty chiefs, who are now represented to have been Rais of pure Rajput descent but who were really of Koch origin. The earliest of the Hindu Traditions refer to the Pandava War, but there are many other legends evidently borrowed from the western peoples, who ruled in Mithila or northern Behar, west of the Kusi, for many centuries before the Christian era.'[1]

THE ANGAS

The earliest inhabitants of the district are believed to have been Angas to the west and Pundras to the east. The former are generally grouped with the Bengal tribes in the epic and formed the eastern-most tribe known to the Aryans in the time of the Atharva-Samhita. Pargiter is of opinion that Anga comprised the modern districts of Bhagalpur and Monghyr and also extended northwards up to the river Kausiki and included the western portions of the district of Purnea.[2]

THE PUNDRAS

The Pundras are classed among the most degraded men in the Aitereya-Brahman, one of the oldest Brahmans which was

[1] Hunter, W. W. *A Statistical Account of Bengal*, Vol. XV, London (1877), pp. 220-221.

[2] *Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal* (1897), p. 95.

written before 1000 B.C., but it is also stated that they were descendants of the sage Vishwamitra,[1] which would seem to imply that they had Aryan blood, though degraded. This opinion survived in the epic period, for in the Mahabharat and Harivamsha the Pundras and Angas are said to be descended from the blind sage Dirghatamas, who was born of the queen of the demon Bali ; and according to the Manu-Samhita, they sank gradually to the condition of Sudras because they neglected the performance of sacred rites and did not consult Brahmans. Apparently, therefore, the Pundras were too powerful to be left out of the Aryan pale, but had rites and customs so different from those in the home of Vedic Brahmanism that a theory of degradation was set up. In the face of non-availability of facts and other corroborative evidences, it is very difficult to locate these stray references in the political history of Purnea.

THE RULERS IN THE EPIC AGE

Some passages in the Mahabharat describing the conquests of Bhima in eastern India, furnish further information about the inhabitants of this part of the country. Bhima, it is said, conquered king of Kausiki Kachcha, a tract lying between Modagiri (Monghyr) and the land of the Pundras, which is identifiable with south Purnea. He also defeated Karna, the king of Anga, conquered the hill tribes, killed the king of Modagiri in battle, and next subdued the powerful Pundra king Vasudeva, who is described as the king of the Vangas, Pundras and Kiratas. The Pundra land appears to have been bounded on the east by the river Karatoya, on the west by the modern Mahananda, which separated it from Anga, on the south by the modern Padma, and on the north by the hills, which were inhabited by original hill tribes, such as the Kiratas. Local tradition still speaks of the struggles and conquests of the Kiratas, and a Kirata woman from the Morang or Tarai is said

[1] Visvamitra is said to have performed his austerities on the river Kausiki and acquired the designation of Maharshi. *See* Chaudhary, R. K. *History of Bihar*, *Madhipura* (1958), p. 2.

to have been the wife of Raja Virat, who according to legends prevalent in the area gave shelter to Yudhishthir and his four Pandava brothers during their 12 years exile. The seat of his fort is still pointed out at Thakurganj in the north of the district.

Magadhan Ascendency Under the Mauryas

At the dawn of history the district west of the Mahananda apparently formed part with Bhagalpur of the kingdom of Anga, while its eastern portion was included in Poundra-Vardhan, the name now given to the land of the Pundras. Anga was an independent kingdom till the sixth century B.C., and there are traditions of war between it and Magadh. During the life time of Buddha, it was annexed by Bimbisara, the ambitious ruler of Magadha (*circa* 519 B.C.), and it appears never to have regained its independence, the Raja of Anga in the time of Buddha being simply a wealthy nobleman of whom nothing is known except that he granted a pension to a Brahman.[1] Thence forward its history merges in that of the Magadhan empire. Poundra-Vardhan also was included in that empire.

The Imperial Guptas

Later on the district formed a part of the empire of the Imperial Guptas, which extended to Kamarupa (Assam) and Samatata (East Bengal) on the east as early as during the reign of Samudragupta. The Gupta empire was shattered by the invasion of the Hunas, and Purnea appears to have passed into the hands of Baladitya, king of Magadha, who in alliance with other kings, and in particular Yasodharman of central India, defeated and captured the Hun King, Mihirgula. Mihirgula later killed Vajra, son of Baladitya and extinguished the viceregal family of the Dattas of Poundra-Vardhan.[2]

[1] Rhys Davids, T. W. *Buddhist India* (1903), pp. 23-24.

[2] Roy Choudhary, H. C. *Political History of Ancient India*, p. 597.
Chatterjee, S. K. *Early History of Northern India*, p. 200.

Mahabhutivarman of Kamrup possibly had put an end to the Imperial Guptas in the Poundra-Vardhan region in sixth century A.D.[1]

Hiuen Tsiang's Account

A brief account of Poundra-Vardhan and its people has been left by Hiuen Tsiang (Yuan-Chuang), who visited it about 640 A.D. According to him the district had a flourishing population and was studded with tanks, hospices and flowering groves. The land was low and moist with abundant crops and a genial climate.[2] In coming to this country from the west, the pilgrim had to cross the Ganges, and going from it eastward, he had to cross a large river. The province was thus, evidently bounded on the west by the Ganges and the Mahananda, and on the east by the Karatoya.[3] The country west of the Mahananda as far as the Gandak was occupied by the Vrijis, a confederacy of tribes, who had come in from the north many centuries before and held the tract between the Ganges and Nepal. They were divided into several clans, and General Cunningham conjectures that Purnea may have been one of their capitals, but had long been absorbed in the Magadhan empire. Further, according to Hiuen Tsiang, the soil of their country was rich and fertile, the climate rather cold. Its inhabitants were quick and hasty of temper, and mostly were heretics, but a few believed in Buddha.[4]

Sasanka and Harsha

At the beginning of the seventh century A.D. the present Purnea seems to have been under Sasanka, the powerful king of Gauda who held both north and south Bihar as well as central Bengal. He was a worshipper of Shiva and hated Buddhism, which he did his best to destory. He dug up and burnt the holy Bodhi tree at Bodh Gaya, broke the stone marked with

[1] Ibid., p. 263.

[2] Beal, S. *Records of the Western World*, Vol. II, pp. 194-195.

[3] *Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. II, *Notes on the Geography of old Bengal* (May, 1908), p. 271.

[4] Beal, S. Op. cit., pp. 77-80.

the footprints of Buddha at Pataliputra, destroyed the Buddhist convents, and scattered the monks carrying his persecutious to the foot of the Nepalese hills. Harsha, the great Buddhist emperor of that century (606-647) determined to crush Sasanka, and about 620 A D. succeeded in doing so during the course of his conquest of northern India, in which, says Hiuen Tsiang,

> 'he went from east to west subduing all who were not obedient, the elephants were not unharnessed, nor the soldiers unhelmeted.'

From Hiuen Tsiang's record, we learn that his sway extended up to Santal Parganas, Purnea and Rajshahi districts. After the death of Harsha, his empire fell a prey to the chaotic condition that followed and it was divided into various petty States. Wang-Hiuentse, the leader of the Chinese Mission sent by the Chinese Emperor to Harsha, took advantage of the chaotic political condition and established Tibetan authority over Mithila and Nepal (between 647 and 650 A.D.). The Tibetan influence continued for a period of about fifty years. It can be surmised that a part of Purnea was under Tibetan influence. Though this point is still a matter of controversy, the fact remains that there was some sort of political upheaval after Harsha's death and it is believed that re-establishment of of the later Guptas in Magadh also replaced Tibetan influence in this eastern part and Purnea seems to have become a part of the Magadhan kingdom under Adityasena (*circa* 660 A.D.).[1]

The Chandra Dynasty

Purnea, as indeed a major part of north Bihar, passed into the hands of the rulers of Chandra dynasty between the fall of the Imperial Magadha and the rise of Bengal under the Palas in the ninth century A.D. Account of Lama Taranath is the sole source for constructing the history of this period. Chandra ruler Vimal Chandra ruled over three kingdoms of

[1] Chaudhary, R. K. *History of Bihar*, *Madhipura* (1958), pp. 77-78.

Bengal, Kamrup and Tirhut. He married the sister of Bhartrihari of Malwa and was succeeded by Govindachandra, and both of them ruled over the same territories.[1]

The Palas

Then ensued a period of anarchy and taking advantage of it Gopala established the Pala dynasty in Bihar and from the ninth to the twelfth century Purnea was under Pala kings. Gopala's son Dharmapala is referred to as Uttarapathasvamin by a Gujarati poet Sodhala and according to the Monghyr Copperplate of Devapala, Dharmapala extended his sway to the west of Bengal. He is said to have subjugated Kamrupa, Tirahuti, Gauda and other countries. From Svayambhuharana, we learn that Dharmapala occupied the throne of Bengal. The Monghyr Copperplate refers to his campaign at the foot of the Himalayas. In the time of Narayanapala, however, Pratiharas seem to have taken advantage of the weakness of the Palas and temporarily extended their influence up to Tirhut, Purnea, Magadha, Hazaribagh and Ranchi. Likewise, Yashovarman Chandella (920-50 A.D.), having occupied Bundelkhand invaded Magadh and Mithila. His son Dhanga (950-95) established his authority over Anga and Gauda. The Pala authority over northern Bengal and Magadha was re-established by Mahipala I (988-1038). The Pala inscriptions discovered at Naulagarh in Monghyr district and Bangaon in Saharsa district, are the proof of the extent of Pala influence in this region. There is no room for any doubt that for the major part of their rule, the Palas, held sway over the whole of the present Bihar and the undivided Bengal and thus Purnea was under them all these years.[2]

The Senas

By the time the Palas had established their power in Bengal and Bihar, a new force had emerged on the arena of Indian

[1] Roy, H. C. *Dynastic History of Northern India*, Vol. I, p. 274.

[2] Chaudhary, R. K. *History of Bihar*, *Madhipura* (1958), pp. 90-94.

political scene. The Muslims had begun to invade India and as a result the different States, particularly of north India, failed to maintain their independence. The rulers of south India took advantage of the situation and the Chola king Rajendra followed by Kalchuri king Karna and others invaded Bihar and Bengal. The most notable of these invasions was that of Chalukya Someshwara of Kalyana (1041-70) and his son Vikramaditya and with them came the Karnatas of Tirhut and Nepal and the Senas of the Karnat Kshatriya stock of Bengal. Vijayasena of the Sena dynasty established his sway over Bengal up to Rajmahal. His successor Vallalasena seems to have conquered some portion of eastern Mithila, held by Karnatas. According to Buchanan Hamilton, the Bengal province of Mithila included the whole of the country called Morang. According to Vallalcharitra, his dominion included Vanga, Varendra, Radha, Bagdi and Mithila. Thus, almost whole of present Purnea was under the suzerainty of the Senas till they collapsed under the weak rulers after the death of Lakshamansena.[1] One would very much like to draw a clearer picture of the historical geography of Purnea from earliest times down to twelfth century A.D. but there is very little reliable and continuous data to do the same.

The Advent of The Muslims

The position remains somewhat the same even after the advent of the Muslims. At the end of the twelfth century the Muslims under Bakhtiyar Khilji swooped down upon Bengal and Bihar but being barred by the powerful Karnata kingdom of Mithila in their eastward expansion through north Bihar they had to content with expansion along with the southern banks of the Ganges and the little riverine tract on the north bank of the Ganges from the mouth of the Gandak to that of Kosi. Bakhtiyar Khilji established his seat of government at Lakhnauti and from there Hisamuddin Iwaz, later on called Ghiyasuddin Iwaz (1211-26), extended the limits of territory held by the Muslims. The whole of the country called Gauda, as well as

[1] Chaudhary, R. K. *History of Bihar*, Madhipura (1958), pp. 94-101.

Bihar, passed under his control and his rule was acknowledged by the surrounding tracts, including Tirhut, which all sent tribute to him. His kingdom consisted of Lakhnauti, Purnea, Tajpur, Ghoraghat and Barbakabad. Lakhnauti, at that time, was bounded by a north-easterly straight line from the modern town of Purnea to Rangpur, on the east by the Tista, on the south by the Ganges and on the west by the lower course of Kosi and from its mouth across the Ganges to the Rajmahal hills.

Even the meagre information that we have about the history of Purnea up to this point is not available afterwards up till seventeenth century. Indeed, the whole of northern India was in a state of flux and turmoil. In between lines we read that Tatar Khan, son of Arslan Khan, Governor of Karrah had forcibly occupied Lakhnauti and secured from Rezia Begum a formal recognition of his status as a ruler of Bihar and Lakhnauti between 1236 and 1245 A.D. After him Malik Jalaluddin Musud Jani ruled as the Governor of Bihar and Bengal from 1247 to 1251. After this we hear of military expeditions under the Delhi Sultans Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq and Firoze Tughlaq as a result of which Bihar was constantly under the suzerainty of Delhi Empire, but Bengal remained independent. It is known that in the war between Sher Shah and Humayun (A.D. 1537-1539), Purnea supplied the latter with some levies.[1] Humayun, however, was defeated and Sher Shah became the ruler of wide tract from Kanauj to the Bay of Bengal and from the Himalayas to Jharkhand and Birbhum.

In the time of Akbar and subsequent Mughal rulers Purnea formed a great military frontier province under the rule of a Faujdar, who was nominally subordinate to the Subadars. In his revenue capacity of Amildar the Faujdar was independent of the Diwan of Bengal and rendered no account, the greater part of Purnea being held in Jagir for the maintenance of himself and his troops. Towards the end of the seventeenth century Ostawal Khan was appointed Faujdar, with the title of Nawab

[1] *See* Appendix C.

and united in his person the command of the frontier army and the fiscal duties of Amil or Superintendent of the revenues. He was succeeded by Abdulla khan who was vested with similar powers. About 1680 Asfandiyar Khan became Nawab of Purnea, and held the office for 12 years. He was succeeded by Babhandiyar Khan, who ruled until his death in 1722, when Saif Khan was appointed Governor. With him the authentic history of Purnea may be said to begin.[1]

Complete Absence of Emigration and Immigration

A glance through the history of the district up to this stage makes it clear that Purnea never enjoyed prominence; civilization, in the sense it is usually used, did not dawn upon the district. It kept on changing hands with one invader after another who established their suzerainty over Anga and Poundra-Vardban or subsequently Bengal and Mithila. The reason for this may not be far to seek.

> 'A remarkable circumstance about Purnea is the entire absence of emigration and immigration.'[2]

This observation of H. G. Cooke seems to have been applicable to Purnea in all ages. The absence of emigration can be attributed to the general prosperity that was the lot of the district. The absence of immigration was on account of the widespread fear amongst the outsiders of the climate of Purnea. It is often said

> 'Nor venom take nor poison, No! If you would die, to Purnea go.'[3]

[1] Hunter, W. W. *A Statistical Account of Bengal*, Vol. XV, ... (1877), pp. 220-221.
O'Malley, L. S. S. *Bengal District Gazetteers—Purnea*, Calcutta (1911), pp. 34-35.

[2] Cooke, H. G. Cameos of Indian Districts (Purnea-Bengal) *The Calcutta Review*, Vol. LXXXVIII, April 1889, Calcutta, p. 247.

[3] The popular Maithili proverb is 'Na Zahar Kha, Na Mahur Kha—Marai Ke Hoi Ta Purainiya Ja.'

This fear of the climate of the district is still traceable, though in far lesser degree. It is well known sociological concept that a civilization flourishes more when it comes in contact with one or more other civilizations. The absence of emigration and immigration appears to have deprived Purnea of any intercourse with other civilizations and thus its own civilization remained somewhat blunted. Furthermore, on account of the bad climate Purnea, probably, came to be colonised quite late and the aboriginal inhabitants of the district failed to attain the heights of civilization that had been scaled in the neighbouring areas.

The Mohammadan Administrative System

It is desirable here to give a brief description of the administrative system as prevailed in Bengal during the Mohammadan rule. In the *Fifth Report* from the Select Committee of the House of Commons on the affairs of the East India Company, dated 28th July, 1812, while giving an account of the Faujdary of Purnea, it is written,

> 'This Frontier Military Province, consisting at least of as many zamindaries as there are Pergunnahs to be found within its present square dimensions of 5, 119 British miles, was always during the Mohamedan Government under the united, almost despotic rule of a Mussulman Faujdar, acting formerly in subordination to the Soubadar, but in his financial capacity of Alumildar or Intendant possessing the greater part of the land in Jageer, for the maintenance of himself and troops, with only a very inconsiderable portion of Khalsa territory (revenue of which used to be paid to the royal treasury) under the Pergunnah denomination of Seerpoor Dulmalpoor. He was in a manner, wholly independent of the imperial dewan of Bengal, and of course rendered no account of any new acquisition of revenue whether proceeding from agricultural improvements, extension of country, or increased assessment,

when all the surplus income so acquired might be received into his proper coffers.'[1]

After the establishment of Mughal Government an officer with a very high jurisdiction both civil and military resided at Purnea and was known by the name of Faujdar with the title of Nawab.[2] The Mughal Government of Bengal, however, was in character more a military occupation than a civil administration. The provincial ruler then was known as Subadar and under him there were Faujdars at the Sarkar or district level. As the word itself signifies, the Faujdar (Fauj=army ; dar=holding) was a military commander. He was appointed to preserve peace and overawe and restrain the zamindars. Thus, the executive force of a province in the Mughal administrative system comprised of the Subadar and the Faujdars. The Faujdars were, at least in theory, appointed by the Emperor and were removable by his authority only.[3]

The jurisdiction of a Faujdar was also known as Chakla. This term, however, was used in the context of revenue administration only. Within a Chakla the Faujdar used to receive rents from the zamindars. It is difficult to say as to what was the practice in this regard during the time of the first Mughals, but from Shah Jahan's time at least, the Faujdars seem to have secured their appointment by speculative offers of lump sums of revenue which they pledged themselves to collect.[4]

Reference has already been made to the fact that a Faujdar was also responsible for the maintenance of peace and order within his jurisdiction. According to Warren Hastings, who during his early career in Bengal had been stationed as Resident at the Darbar and had acquired in that position an unrivalled knowledge of the native government,

[1] Firminger, W. K. (Editor). *The Fifth Report*, Vol. II, Calcutta (1917), p. 333.

[2] Buchanan, Francis. *An account of the district of Purnea in 1809-1810*, Patna (1928), p. 55.

[3] Firminger, W. K. (Editor). *The Fifth Report*, Vol. I, ... (1917). Introduction, p. XXXII

[4] *Ibid.*, p. XXIII.

'It was the zamindars' duty to give constant intelligence to the Nawab through the Roy Royan (Rai Rain) and to assist the Faujdar in the oppression of robbers and in executing the measures, which were required of him for preserving the peace of the country, but this duty first and immediately belonged to the Faujdar, who was the representative of the Nazim and to him the people looked up for justice and protection, even against their own chiefs.'[1]

Thus, zamindar was answerable for the peace and good order of the country as far as his jurisdiction extended, but only as the subordinate instrument of a larger system. The Zamindars neither presided in the criminal court of his jurisdiction, nor pronounced, nor executed sentence on any offences whatever except non-payment of the rents or revenue.

According to Ghulam Hussain Khan, the author of *Sair-ul-Mutakharin*, Bihar and Bengal had been divided into the following jurisdiction[2] :

Behar—Shahabad and Rohtas, Monghyr and Behar, Champaran and Saran, Tirhoot and Rajipur

Bengal—Chittagong (Islamabad)

Sylhet
Rangpur
Rangamati
Midnapur
Castle of Djat gur[3] poorania
Rajshahi
Burdwan
Hugli.

[1] Ibid. (quoted in), p. XL

[2] Khan, Ghulam Hussain *Sair-ul-Mutakharin*, Vol. III, ... (1902), pp. 178-179

[3] Jalalgarh is situated some ten miles northeast of the Kosi river.

All of the above jurisdictions were called Sarkars. The district of Purnea as constituted on the eve of Saif Khan's administration in 1722 comprised of Sarkar Puraniya and parts of Sarkar Tajpur and Sarkar Monghyr of Akbar's time according to the lists given in *Ain-i-Akbari*. Sarkar Puraniya consisted of the following eight Mahals :

(1) Asonja (present Asja)
(2) Haveli Puraniya
(3) Dalmalpur
(4) Jairampur (not identifiable)
(5) Sultanpur
(6) Sripur
(7) Katiyar (present Katihar)
(8) Kadwa

Apart from these Mahals there was one more known as Fill Mahal, i.e. taxes on elephants caught in the Terai jungles.

Sarkar Tajpur of Akbar's time comprised of twentynine Mahals as per list given in the *Ain-i-Akbari*, but part of this Sarkar falls in Dinajpur district of West Bengal and only the following Parganas fall in the district of Purnea :

(1) Surjapur
(2) Kumarpur (present Kumaripur)
(3) Bohara (present Bhaura)
(4) Badokhar (present Badaur)
(5) Dilawarpur (present Dilwarpur)
(6) Tajpur Haveli (present Tajpur)
(7) Taldwar (present Maldwar)

In the *Ain-i-Akbari* only Pargana Dharampur of Sarkar Monghyr is mentioned to have been included within Purnea district. It will be shown later at the appropriate place that Saif Khan in 1731 added Parganas Dharampur, Nathpur,

Gorari and Dhaphar to Sarkar Puraniya. It is clear therefore, that Nathpur, Gorari and Dhaphar were outside the district jurisdiction of Purnea in the time of Akbar. It is probable that these Mahals were under the possession and control of the hillmen of the north.

Thus, the above divisions were the fiscal units of the district and the collection of rent was made by the Zamindars or revenue farmers under the superintendence of the Faujdar or military Governor of the district, who was also the Amil or revenue collector. A number of Kanungoes, Patwaries, Mandals, Zamindars and revenue farmers were engaged in the work of rent assessment and rent collection. Such was the system of administration, both civil and military as prevailed in Purnea during the Mohammadan rule. Having traced the history of the district up to 1722 and also the territorial shape of it just on the eve of Saif Khan's administration, it is proposed in the next chapter to examine how Saif Khan made some remarkable conquests and added new territorial dimensions to the district. Apart from that he also established unprecedented peace, and as a result prosperity dawned upon the district.

CHAPTER—III

ERA OF TERRITORIAL ACQUISITIONS
SAIF KHAN

DATE OF ACCESSION AND TENURE OF FAUJDARSHIP

According to James Grant, 'Seyf Khan is the first and most famous of provincial rulers of this district on modern record. He governed with great ability for thirty years, until his death in 1159 A.B.'[1] Bengal era 1159 when converted to Christian era, comes to 1752 and this means that Saif Khan started his career at Purnea in the year 1722. It is, however, authentically recorded that after the death of Saif Khan the government was bestowed in rapid succession on Mahammad Abed and Fakhruddin Hussain Khan or Nawab Bahadur[2] till the latter was removed to make room for Saulat Jang, better known as Saiyed Ahmad, who governed Purnea for full seven years (1149-1156)[3]. This makes it difficult to accept the fact that Saif Khan ruled for thirty years and till his death in 1752, as stated by James Grant. After considering various original records, K. K. Datta gives the date of Saif Khan's death as 1748 A.D. and says that till his death he continued to be the Governor of Purnea.[4] This is an acceptable proposition since the period of Saif Khan's immediate successors, mainly that of Saulat Jang is authentically known. The author of *Sair-ul-Mutakharin* also mentions that Saif Khan died shortly after Alivardi Khan

[1] Firminger, W. K. (Editor). *The Fifth Report from the Select Committee of the House of Commons on the Affairs of the East India Company,* Vol. II, ... (1917), p. 336 (Appendix 4).

[2] Hunter, W.W. *A Statistical Account of Bengal,* Vol. XV,... (1877), p. 223.

[3] Khan, Ghulam Hussain. *Sair-ul-Mutakharin,* Eng. tr. by Raymond *alias* Mustapha, Vol. II, ... (1902), p. 141.

Datta, K. K. *Alivardi and His Times,* Calcutta, The World Press (1963), p. 135.

[4] ————, Calcutta, ... (1963), p. 135.

returned to Murshidabad, his capital after defeating the rebellious Afghans.[1] At another place he says that Saif Khan 'departed this world at the beginning of the year one thousand one hundred and sixty-two'.[2] Alivardi returned to Murshidabad after his victory over Afghans on 30th November 1748 A.D.[3] This date also corresponds to the beginning of the year 1162 A.H. The logical implication of all that has been said above is that Saif Khan either ruled for four years less than that has been stated by James Grant, or he must have started his tenure of office in 1718 A.D. As regards the possibility of Saif Khan having started his tenure of office in Purnea in 1718 A.D., it should suffice to state that nowhere has any other date than 1722 A.D. been stated for the purpose. According to W. W. Hunter, Saif Khan succeeded Babhandiyar Khan who ruled over Purnea until his death in 1722.[4] Thus on the scrutiny of different records about the death of Saif Khan and the tenure of office of different Faujdars of Purnea, preceding or succeeding him, it appears that he ruled over Purnea from 1722 A.D. to 1748 A.D., i.e. for about a period of 26 years. The discrepancies in the dates given by different authors arise most likely on account of conversion by them of Hijri era to Bengal era and again to Christian era.

APPOINTMENT

Saif Khan was the greatest of the Governors of Purnea[5] and was a nobleman of very high lineage. 'He was a Lord of the rank of seven thousand horse, and a son of Emir Qhan, the famous Viceroy of Cabool'.[6] He was connected to the Imperial

[1] Khan, Ghulam Hussain. *Sair-ul-Mutakharin,* Vol. II, ... (1902), p. 74.

[2] Ibid, p. 74.

[3] Datta, K. K. Op. Cit., p. 113.

[4] Hunter, W. W. *A Statistical Account of Bengal,* Vol. XV, ... (1877), p. 221.

[5] ————, Vol. XV, ... (1877), p. 221.

[6] Khan, Ghulam Hussain. *Sair-ul-Mutakharin,* Vol. II, ... (1902), p. 73.

house through his father, one of whose relations Abdulla Khan was Prime Minister to Emperor Farrukhasiyar.[1] Bengal, the eastern most province of the Empire was then being ruled by Murshid Quli Khan, who was anxious to bring Purnea, the outlying portion of his province, under effective control. He, therefore, requested Emperor Auranzeb to put at his disposal the services of a good General and the latter obliged him by sending Saif Khan to Bengal. Records are not clear about the time when Saif Khan was sent to Bengal. It is, however, known that the Nawab, having obtained his services conferred upon him the office of Faujdar of Purnea and commandant of Jalalgarh, making him a grant of Parganas Dharampur or Birnagar and Gondwara, as well as the Mahals constituting the Jagir of the commandant in the year 1722 A.D.[2]

Conquests

On the eve of Saif Khan's appointment in the above capacity, Purnea was bounded on the west by river Kosi which flowed through a little west of the present Purnea town and proceeding southward fell into the Ganga somewhere near Karhagola. The northern boundary was some 14 miles from the present town of Purnea which is proved by the existence of a frontier fort and a village called 'Seema' even to this day near Jalalgarh. From Jalalgarh the boundary ran eastward passing a little north of the junction of the Mahananda and Kankai Rivers and then to the south to a point where the present Pargana of Suryapur of Purnea bordered the district of Dinajpur.[3] Saif Khan after his appointment, extended the jurisdiction of Purnea towards the west by one-third through his conquests of the portions west of the river Kosi in 1732 and

[1] Ibid, Vol. I, p. 60.

[2] Salim, Ghulam Hussain Khan. *Riyaz-us-Salatin*, Eng. tr. by Abdus Salam, ... (1902), pp. 36-37.

[3] Hunter, W. W. *A Statistical Account of Bengal*, Vol. XV, ... (1902), p 222.

almost an equal area towards the north on the side of Morang[1]. According to James Grant the area within the jurisdiction of Purnea after Saif Khan's conquests amounted to 5119 square miles[2], i.e. a little more than what it was in 1950.[3] The following table[4] gives an idea of the increase in area of Purnea in Saif Khan's regime :

The Area of Purnea Between
1722-1748 A.D.

Year	*Area in square miles*	*The mode of Acquisition*
1722 A.D.	1706	Original jurisdiction
1732 A.D.	1706	Additions made through conquests
1732-1748 A.D.	1707	do
Total	5119	

Conquest Towards the West Beyond the River Kosi

The area beyond the river Kosi, conquered by Saif Khan in 1732 A.D., was under the control of Bir Shah and his son and included Parganas Gondwara, Bhawanipur, Birnagar, Nathpur and Dhaphar and the major portion of this area together was known as Pargana Dharampur and was a part of Sarkar Monghyr within Suba Bihar.[5] Bir Shah, sometimes called Bir Singh, a Jamadar or Captain of the guard, had been

[1] The tract of country between the northern limits of Purnea district and the foot of Nepal proper is locally known as Morang.

W. K. Firminger. *The Fifth Report*, Vol. II, ... (1917), p. 336.

[2] Ibid, p. 335.

[3] Mishra, Madaneshwar. *Some Aspects of the Land Revenue History of Purnea District* : 1765-1950—A thesis submitted to Bhagalpur University for Ph.D. Degree (Unpublished), 1971, p. 22.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Firminger, W. K. *The Fifth Report*, Vol. II, ... (1917), p. 337.

appointed to manage the estate in aforesaid Parganas on behalf of his master, the zamindar of the area, Maharaja Raghav Singh of Darbhanga. Bir Shah had his capital at Birnagar, a place which exists with the same name even today. Francis Buchanan has given a vivid description of the state of affairs obtaining in the said area under Bir Shah who soon after his appointment built a fort and refused to pay any revenue.[1] Refractory conduct on his part warranted Imperial interference and accordingly in 1720 Sharmat Ali Khan, a General, with some troops was sent from Delhi. The former, however, defeated the Delhi General in the first encounter at Saiyadganj. The second bout proved to be final to the detriment of Bir Shah, because Sharmat Ali received the assistance of not only Pashupati Das, a General sent by the Darbhanga Maharaja, but also of Saif Khan, who overran Birnagar, expelled its disloyal cheif Durjan Singh, son of Bir Shah and thoroughly subjugated his territory. According to Francis Buchanan Bir Shah's son was killed in action and his power was totally crushed[2] and thus the defeat of Saiyadganj was avenged by Sharmat Ali Khan. The territory of Bir Shah was now delivered over to Saif Khan, who annexed it to the district of Purnea in the year 1732 A.D.[3] Raghav Singh was, however, confirmed in the zamindari and held the whole until the year 1738 A.D., when on account of his having incurred the displeasure of the Nawab, Nathpur and Gorari were taken from him and given to the zamindar of Purnea, Raja Indra Narayan.[4] 'One still enduring result of this conquest is the almost unique system of having two tauzi serials in this district—one for the Fasli Mahals including all Estates in Parganas Dharampur, Harwat, Dhaphar and Chai, the other

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[1] Buchanan, Francis. *An Account of the District of Purnea in 1809-10*, Patna, Bihar & Orissa Research Society, (1928), pp. 507-08.

[2] ————, Patna, ... (1928), pp 507-08.

[3] Firminger, W. K. *The Fifth Report*, Vol. II, ... (1917), p. 432.

[4] Buchanan, Francis. Op. cit., p. 508.

for the Bengali Mahals which comprise the rest of the district'.[1]

Conquest in Morang

As already seen, Saif Khan extended his sphere of influence towards north also. Taking advantage of internal dissensions prevailing in Morang, a frontier district of Nepal, he overran and subjugated this territory of Rajputs about the year of the Bengal era, 1145, i.e. 1738 A.D.[2] He forced the hill tribes back to the Terai, cleared the jungle, extended the northern frontier some 30 miles further north, and brought under cultivation the wastelands that extended up to the foot of the hills. Nandlal, a Hindu Officer variously described as Dewan or land steward of the Nawab and Jamadar or Captain of the guard, under the government of Saif Khan seems to have had the settlement and care of this newly annexed territory.[3] Through his conquests, Saif Khan not only increased his influence but also his revenue. To quote the author of *Riyaz-us-Salatin*,

> 'He, thus enlarged the country and its resources and day by day the strength of his government, of his finances and of his army increased.'[4]

Increase in Revenue

Having trebled the area of his original jurisdiction through conquests, Saif Khan greatly enhanced his finances as well. A brief survey of revenue assessments of Purnea made from time to time during the time of Saif Khan and earlier would reveal the significance of Saif Khan's revenue administration. As already seen 'the modern district of Purnea included Sarkar

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[1] Byrne, J. *Final Report on the Survey and Settlement Operation in the District of Purnea*, 1901-1908. Calcutta, The Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, (1908), p. 17.

[2] Buchanan, Francis. *An Account of the District of Purnea in 1809-10*, Patna, (1928), p. 55.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Salim, Ghulam Hussain Khan. *Riyaz-us-Salatin*, Eng. tr. by Abdus Salam, ... (1902), p. 37.

Puraniya and parts of Sarkar Tajpur and Sarkar Monghyr of Akbar's time, according to the list given in the *Ain-i-Akbari*'.[1] The following list[2] gives the Parganawise division of Purnea separately under Bihar and Bengal Provinces in those days :

Pargana	*Sarkar*	*Suba*
1 Haveli Purnea		
2 Sripur Dalmalpur		
3 Sultanpur		
4 Katihar	Purnea	Bengal
5 Kadwa		
6 Asja		
7 Teera Khardah		
1 Badaur		
2 Haveli Tajpur		
3 Kolraha		
4 Kumaripur		
5 Dilawarpur	Tajpur	Bengal
6 Surjapur		
7 Bhaura		
8 Bahadurpur		
9 Deorhi Khawaspur		
1 Gondwara		
2 Bhawanipur		
3 Birnagar	Monghyr	Bihar
4 Nathpur		
5 Dhaphar		

Very little is known of any attempt at making the share of the produce of land payable to the State prior to Todar Mall's Settlement under Akbar in 1582. According to Grant's

[1] Byrne, J. *Final Report on the Survey and Settlement Operation in the District of Purnea*, 1901-08. Calcutta, ... (1908), p. 15.

[2] Firminger, W. K. *The Fifth Report*, Vol. II (Appendix No. 4), ... (1917), p. 336.

Historical and Comparative Analysis of the Finances of Bengal (included in the *Fifth Report*) 'the revenue demands of the two divisions of Purnea, i.e. Sarkar Purnea and Sarkar Tajpur, were assessed by the great Finance Minister at Rs 1,60,219 and Rs 1,62,096 respectively and Pargana Dharampur of Sarkar Monghyr at Rs 1,00,000[1]. The total assessment of these three Sarkars came to Rs 4,22,315. But since the time of Todar Mall, there have been so many changes in the boundary of the district that any attempt at comparison of his assessment with that of a later period will only lead to confusion[2]. In 1722, three years before the death of Murshid Kuli Khan, however, Purnea was assessed at Rs 2,78,830 and out of this amount, Rs 1,80,166 was assigned to Saif Khan as a Rakmi Jagir or personal grant of revenue which was secured by a 'sanad' or grant,[3] rest finding way to the Khalsa or treasury. The personal grant of revenue to the Faujdar was meant for the maintenance of himself and his troops. This was done in view of the fact that Purnea was a frontier military district. Shujauddin Khan, who succeeded Murshid Kuli Khan as Nawab of Bengal (1726-39), redistributed the lands of Purnea into a revenue portion valued at Rs 2,14,854 and a Jagir portion valued at Rs 1,29,374.[4] He also added some abwabs or local cess, etc., and the total assessment came to Rs 5,61,857. In spite of the extension of the area of jurisdiction of Purnea consequent upon Saif Khan's conquests 'the names, numbers and valuation of farms assessed for the ancient crown rent, underwent no alteration.[5] Saif Khan did not submit any account of the increase in revenue arising out of either extension of jurisdiction by conquests or agricultural improvement.[6] After Saif

[1] Firminger, W. K. *The Fifth Report*, Vol. II, ... (1917), p. 232.

[2] Mishra, Madaneshwar. *Some Aspects of the Land Revenue History of Purnea District* (Unpublished)—a thesis approved by Bhagalpur University for Ph.D. Degree (1971), p. 25.

[3] Hunter, W. W. *A Statistical Account of Bengal*, Vol. XV, ... (1877), p. 387.

[4] Ibid, p. 388.

[5] Firminger, W. K. *The Fifth Report*, Vol. II, ... (1917), p. 336.

[6] Ibid, p. 337.

Khan's conquest of Dharampur a sum of Rs 40,000 was deducted in the accounts of the Provincial Treasury from the assessment papers of Bihar but the same was not added to Bengal. The reason was that after his conquest of Dharampur Saif Khan submitted no account to the Murshidabad Government of the subsequent increase in revenue. According to the Letter Copy Book of the Resident at the Darbar at Murshidabad, 'In the time of Allyverdy Cawn the Province of Purnea paid something less than four lacks of rupees a year.'[1] And Saif Khan, by way of revenue, collected a sum of Rs 18,00,000.[2] This shows that the rental of Saif Khan was much more than the revenue paid by him. Thus, in matters of revenue administration Saif Khan assumed near-independence and the records show that the Provincial Government never pressed him to render accounts of his revenues.

Check upon Zamindars

Saif Khan was always keen to keep the Zamindars under his effective control. This is obvious from the fact that one Durjaynarayan, proprietor of Kumaripur Estate, was deprived of his property on account of his having picked up a quarrel with the Dewan of the Nawab.[3] Similarly, when a quarrel started between Muhammad Waris and Muhammad Jang, two brothers, for the control of their paternal estate of Baror (not identifiable now), Saif Khan on receiving a complaint intervened in the matter and ordered both of them to have an equal share in the patrimony.[4] All this shows that Saif Khan was always ready to exert in order to prevent any eventuality that might affect the revenues of the district.

[1] Letter Copy Book of the Resident at the Darbar at Murshidabad 1969-70 (Enclosure to Becher's letter, dated the 25th September, 1769), p. XXV.

[2] Firminger, W. K. Op. cit., p. 336.

[3] Buchanan, Francis. *An Account of the District of Purnea in 1809-10*, Patna (1928), p. 479.

[4] Ibid, p. 483.

General Administration

He ruled over Purnea with great ability and distinction. The very manner in which Saif Khan's services were obtained, with a purpose to bring about effective control over the outlying portion of Bengal Suba is a testimony to his abilities as a General and administrator. He was the choice of no less a person than the Mughal sovereign Aurangzeb.[1] Saif Khan, on his part, fully responded to the faith reposed in him. He brought about a complete transformation in the material conditions of Purnea. This is well explained in a letter of G. G. Ducarel, the first English Supervisor of Purnea, written on 20th December, 1771. To quote from the letter,

> '...It is represented by the people here that the superiority this country had in point of wealth and cultivation...was owing to the prudent Administration of Syef Cawn during his long Government which drew people from all Quarters to settle here, and brought this province from an extensive Forest thinly, peopled, and producing little, into an improved and valuable State.'[2]

The long and prudent administration of Saif Khan contributed a lot towards the betterment of material conditions of the district and his refusal to submit revenue accounts to Murshidabad Court was probably because of the fact that he did not want to allow the outflow of capital from Purnea and to invest them in Purnea itself in order to make the land flourishing.

His Relations with Subadars of Bengal

The greatest source of strength to Saif Khan in all his ventures, military or otherwise, appears to have been the unqualified support that he received from the successive

[1] Salim, Ghulam Hussain. *Riyaz-us-Salatin*, Calcutta, ... (1902), p. 36.

[2] *Proceeding of the Comptrolling Council of Revenue at Murshidabad (1770)*, Vol. VIII, dated 20th December, 1771 (Purnea Letter S.L.S. No. 523).

Nawabs of Bengal, specially Murshid Kuli Jafar Khan, who furnished him with troops whenever he wanted them. He was on terms of close friendship with the latter, in spite of the fact that he had refused to marry his granddaughter, Nafissa Begham, because her lineage was inferior to his own. Murshid Kuli Khan was the son of a poor Brahman, who, when a boy, was bought by a Persian merchant, who had him circumcised and educated. Every year the Nawab invited him to spend some time at Murshidabad and would rally his guest on his ways.[1] Not only with Murshid Kuli Khan, but also with Shuja Khan, his successor as Nawab of Bengal, Saif Khan maintained best of relations and paid regular visits to his courts.[2] Though his relations with Alivardi Khan, the next Nawab of Bengal, were not always cordial, but they are definitely indicative of his stately and ambitious character as well as his diplomatic skill. The vicissitudes of fortune in the Delhi Empire during this period afforded a fair opportunity to the ambitious officers of the Bengal Government to try for the fulfilment of their designs.[3] When in 1740 A.D. Alivardi Khan, then Deputy Governor of Bihar, rose in revolt, Saif Khan underestimating his power, and himself expecting military support from the Imperial Court, gave out that he would march against him and punish his rebellion. But soon he realised that he had not properly understood the situation and that no notice had been taken of his intentions, he counterfeited madness to give best colouring to his behaviour. Alivardi Khan who knew of the former's powerful connections at the Delhi Court, thought it expedient not to resent Saif Khan's conduct and to overlook the whole incident.[4] This is

[1] Stewart, Charles. *The History of Bengal*, Delhi, Oriental Publishers, (1971), p. 381.

[2] Khan Ghulam Hussain. *Sair-ul-Mutakharin*, Vol. II, Calcutta, ... (1902), p. 73.

[3] Datta, K. K. *Alivardi and His Times*, Calcutta, ... (1963), pp. 14-15.

[4] Khan, Ghulam Hussain. *Sair-ul-Mutakharin*, Vol. I, Calcutta, ... (1902), p. 357.

Salim, Ghulam Hussain. *Riyaz-us-Salatin*, Calcutta, ... (1902), pp. 37-38.

corroborated by the fact that even after firmly establishing himself on the Murshidabad Masnad Alivardi was anxious to maintain good relationship with Saif Khan and looked forward to him for support in hours of need. In 1742 when Alivardi was locked in grim battle with the Marathas, he appealed to his deputy at Purnea to help him and the latter obliged him by sending 5,000 soldiers to Murshidabad.[1] On another occasion Saif Khan assisted the Nawab of Bengal with a detachment of useful troops including fifteen hundred musketeers in his endeavour to quell a revolt of Afghans at Patna.[2] On his way from Patna to Murshidabad after his victory over the Afghans, Alivardi Khan was invited to the 'magnificent preparatives' made by Saif Khan at a place within his territory on the other side of the Ganga. Saif Khan had extended this invitation to Alivardi Khan as a matter of right which he thought to have earned by sending presents to the latter as well as by assisting him in his mission against the Afghans.[3] The invitation was refused by the Nawab who was offended at Saif Khan never going to his court at Murshidabad, which the latter regularly did in the time of Murshid Kuli Khan and Shuja Khan.[4] Ghulam Hussain Khan, the author of *Sair-ul-Mutakharin* quotes the words of Alivardi Khan, which the latter said to his intimates in this connection,

> 'Although Seif Qhan was a Lord of the rank of seven thousand horse, and a son of Emir Qhan, the famous Viceroy of Cabool, yet, after all, he would not be deemed anything higher or better than a Faujder of Poornia, and since he used once a year to comply so far with the rules of decency, as to come down to Moorshoodabad to see Djaafer Qhan and Ser-effrazqhan,

[1] Datta, K. K. *Alivardi and His Times*, Calcutta, ... (1963), p. 60.

[2] Khan, Ghulam Hussain. *Sair-ul-Mutakharin*, Vol. II, Calcutta, ... (1902), p. 73.

Salim, Ghulam Hussain, *Riyaz-us-Salatin*, Calcutta, ... (1902), pp. 36-38.

[3] Khan, Ghulam Hussain. Op. cit., Vol. II, p. 73.

[4] Ibid.

why then does he not come to see me likewise? Possibly the gentleman thinks such a condescendence beneath his rank and dignity.'[1]

DEATH

Saif Khan after such a reply returned to Purnea, where in a little time he fell sick, and his sickness turning to a looseness and flux 'he departed this world at the beginning of the year one thousand one hundred and sixty-two.[2]

FAKHRUDDIN HUSSAIN KHAN

Saif Khan was succeeded by his eldest son Fakhruddin Hussain Khan, often styled as Nawab Bahadur or valiant Nawab, 'who is said to have no talents or capacity for government and to have been a bad son and a bad brother.'[3]

A BAD FAMILY MAN

A vivid account of how this headless prince had conspired in his father's lifetime to deprive the latter of his territory and also to imprison him with the assistance of the provincial army, has been left by Ghulam Hussain Khan.[4] Fakhruddin Hussain Khan sent through one Mir Muhammad Ali[5] a letter to

[1] Khan, Ghulam Hussain. *Sair-ul-Mutakharin*, Vol. II, Calcutta, ... (1902), p. 73.

[2] Ibid, p. 74.

[3] Khan Ghulam Hussain. *Sair-ul-Mutakharin*, Vol. II, Calcutta, ... (1902), p. 74.

[4] Ibid, pp. 63-64.

[5] The translator of *Sair-ul-Mutakharin* has the following to say about Mir Muhammad Ali:

'He died at Moorshood-abad a few years ago, and left a library of two thousand volumes; an amazing number, indeed, in such a country as this—He was so highly respected for his learning, that both the Nawab Mubarec-ed-doula, and the Nawab Muzaffare-jung, *alias* Mahmed-reza-qhan, used to make him a profound bow from afar, on their going to render him a visit; nor did they offer to sit down without being bid.'

Khan, Ghulam Hussain. *Sair-ul-Mutakharin*, Vol. II, Calcutta, ... (1902), p. 63 (footnote 29).

Alivardi Khan containing a request for military help to enable him to give shape to his conspiracy. He also obtained an assurance from the Mir to the effect that the latter would support the contents of the letter with all his influence. The Mir did so but little did he know about the contents. When that was disclosed to him by Alivardi Khan, he was struck dumb. Everybody present there had a feeling of detestation for such a 'denatured son'.

Furthermore, after his accession, Fakhruddin Hussain Khan not only took possession of the Government, but also 'seized on the family estate which amounted to immense sums that had been accumulating these forty years past, and consisted of ready money, jewels of an estimate value, jems and precious costly stuffs. All this he took to himself, to the exclusion of his younger brothers; and not content with that, he snatched out of their hands even what they were already in possession of, leaving them only a small matter, or what they had been able to conceal.'[1]

STRAINED RELATIONSHIP WITH SAIYED AHMAD KHAN

The Nawab, hearing of the oppressive conduct of Fakhruddin Hussain Khan, appointed in his stead his own nephew and son-in-law, Saiyad Ahmad Khan to become the Faujdar of Purnea. In the lifetime of his father, Fakhruddin Hussain Khan had been married to a daughter of Saiyad Ahmad Khan, but as ill luck would have it the bride suddenly died on the fourth day of the marriage. Incapable of acting prudently and moderately, Fakhruddin Hussain Khan left his in-laws in grief and returned to Purnea. By his thoroughly unbecoming conduct he not only disgraced his family but also incurred the wrath of his in-laws which later on proved disastrous for him.

Saiyad Ahmad Khan soon after his appointment as the Faujdar of Purnea sent Khadim Hussain Khan to take possession of his new Government and then soon himself followed

[1] Ibid, p. 74.

him at the head of 'two or three thousand horse and three or four thousand men'.[1] Fakhruddin Hussain Khan realising the hopelessness of resistance, sought for Saiyad Ahmad's friendship and himself leaving his forces on the banks of Mahananda he quietly went to the Nawab's court at Murshidabad where he was 'complimented with all the honorific demonstrations of regards customary in India' and provided with 'a place for his residence, or in other words, for his confinement'.[2] But soon afterwards, during one of the Maratha invasions, hearing an exaggerated account of a mutiny in the Bengal army, and thinking that the Nawab's power was at an end, he escaped from Murshidabad and joined his forces, which he had left encamped on the Mahananda. Therefrom he marched on to Purnea but as soon as Saiyad Ahmad Khan advanced to meet him, he retired to Maldah. There his incapacity and cowardice soon became apparent. His troops began to desert him and he remained inactive until Alivardi Khan sent a small force which took him and his treasure to Murshidabad, where he was kept under surveillance. In this way, says the author of *Sair-ul-Mutakharin,* the Nawab 'at one and the same stroke took possession of that immense heap of money and jewels that had been amassing for half a century together'.[3] Fakhruddin Hussain Khan, however, taking advantage of the neglect or connivance of the Nawab's guard once again managed to escape and went over to the side of the Marathas, who having turned the Bengal army, were proceeding to Murshidabad by rapid marches through the hilly country. But he soon became tired of his new friends. Finding himself harassed by long marches and daily toil, he took a disgust to such a way of life, and quitted the Marathas to make his way to Shahjahanabad or Delhi where he died soon afterwards.[4]

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1 Khan, Ghulam Hussain. *Sair-ul-Mutakharin,* Vol. II, Calcutta, ... (1902), p. 74.

2 Ibid, pp. 75-76.

3 Khan, Ghulam Hussain. *Sair-ul-Mutakharin,* Vol. II, Calcutta, ... (1902), p. 85.

4 Ibid, p. 90
Salim, Ghulam Hussain. *Riyaz-us-Salatin,* Calcutta, ... (1902), p. 359.

Thus ended the brief rule of Fakhruddin Hussain Khan which is worthy of notice for nothing but his thoughtless and amusing acts. Purnea was bound to suffer under this wayward prince, but nature favoured it through an early death of Fakhruddin Hussain Khan. It was left to his successor Saiyad Ahmad Khan to resume and improve upon the good work of Saif Khan. Purnea fell into the hands of the Muhammadans as early as in the thirteenth century but it attained opulence and prosperity only in the time of Saif Khan.[1] He annexed to Purnea about 5,119 square miles of land belonging to the neighbouring territories. Saif Khan's rule of about 26 years can aptly be termed as an era of territorial acquisitions. Apart from it, he 'thoroughly chastised the other malcontents and freed the roads from all perils'.[2] He explored all the means of realising the revenue and also greatly enhanced the revenue potentialities of Purnea. In the next chapter it is proposed to examine how Saiyad Ahmad Khan, as the Faujdar of Purnea for next seven years, consolidated the gains of Saif Khan and thereby did much to add to the grandeur of Purnea as also to salvage his own prestige, lost early in his career at Orissa and elsewhere.

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1 Salim, Ghulam Hussain. *Riyaz-us-Salatin,* Calcutta, ... (1902), p. 36.

2 Ibid, p. 37.

CHAPTER IV

PERIOD OF CONSOLIDATION SAIYAD AHMAD KHAN

EARLY CAREER

As already seen the government of Purnea was bestowed upon Saiyad Ahmad Khan in place of Fakhruddin Hussain Khan, the unworthy son of Saif Khan. Saiyad Ahmad Khan, properly called Nassirulmulk Mahamuddoulah Saiyad Ahmad Khan Bahadur Saulat Jung, his original name being Agha Muhammad Saiyad, was the second son of the three sons of Haji Mirza Ahmad, elder brother of Mirza Muhammad Ali or Alivardi Khan, Nawab of Bengal (1740-1756 A.D.). In the eighteenth century the gradual weakening of the central authority under the later Mughals provided an opportunity to the Iranian and central or west Asiatic immigrant fortune-seekers who had received State patronage in the time of Jahangir, to assert their independence as well as realise their ambition, and the result was the rise of Alivardi Khan in Bengal (1740) as also of Asaf Jah Nizamul Mulk in the Deccan (1713); Saadat Ali in Oudh (1723), Saifuddoullah in the Punjab (1713) and Murshid Quli Jafar Khan in Bengal (1726).[1] After Alivardi Khan was firmly established on the Masnad of Bengal, the Mughal Emperor Muhammad Shah granted recognition to his authority in that capacity and also conferred titles upon him as well as his kinsmen and principal officers. Saiyad Ahmad Khan received the title of Saulat Jang[2] or impetuous in war. Similarly he received the title of Mahamuddoula or the important of the Empire, when the Emperor decorated Alivardi and his kinsmen with titles as a reward to them for their victory over the Marathas in 1742 A.D[3] Saiyad Ahmad Khan's early

[1] Datta, K. K. *Alivardi and His Times*, Calcutta, ... (1963), p. 1.

[2] ——————, Calcutta, ... (1963), p. 33.
Khan, Ghulam Hussain. *Sair-ul-Mutakharin*, Vol. II, Calcutta, ... (1902), p. 133.

[3] Ibid, Vol. I, p. 407.

career is very much linked with the career of Alivardi Khan. The former fully participated in the transactions undertaken by Alivardi Khan and his brother to help Shujauddin Khan, Nawab of Bengal (1739-40). The Nawab recognised the sound advice and meritorious services rendered to him by them all by making a number of appointments including that of Saiyad Ahmad Khan as Faujdar of Rangpur.[1] After himself becoming Nawab of Bengal, Alivardi Khan, as a worthy doyen of the ruling family, entertained kindly feelings for his relatives, officers and ordinary servants, and often rewarded them bountifully.[2] It was, therefore, that he appointed Saiyad Ahmad Khan, his nephew and son-in-law, as Faujdar of Purnea in spite of the fact that he had miserably failed in discharging his duties as Governor of Orissa to which charge he had been appointed in 1741,[3] after the defeat of the then Governor of Orissa, Murshid Kuli Khan *alias* Rustam Jang. As Governor of Orissa Saiyad Ahmad Khan proved an utter failure. Alivardi Khan had taken care to form a 'Council of Administration' which included veteran officers like Goojar Khan to help the young and inexperienced prince, but the latter out of his enthusiasm to effect 'parsimony and frugality' in administration ordered a reduction in the pay of his troops and also in the salaries and emoluments of all those who had opted to serve near him in preference to Murshidabad, their homeland.[4] This easily alienated the trusted officers and troops placed in his service by his uncle. This was quite an impolitic act on his part for this led to the admission of natives of the newly conquered province to fill up the vacancies in large numbers. These new soldiers and officers secretly cherished an attachment to the dispossessed Governor Rustam Jang. Furthermore,

[1] Salim, Ghulam Hussain. *Riyaz-us-Salatin*, Calcutta, ... (1902), p. 294.
Khan, Ghulam Hussain. Op. cit., p. 281.

[2] Datta, K. K. Op. cit., p. 138.

[3] Khan, Ghulam Hussain. *Sair-ul-Mutakharin*, Vol. I, Calcutta, ... (1902), p. 355.
Datta, K. K. *Alivardi and His Times*, Calcutta, ... (1963), p. 38.

[4] Khan, Ghulam Hussain. Op. cit.

'intoxicated with the fumes of power and sovereignty' Saiyad Ahmad Khan caused exactions from the Zamindars of Orissa on the basis of the unfounded accusation that they concealed wealth belonging to Rustam Jang. He also sent garrisons to carry away ladies to his harem from the houses of the unfortunate Zamindars. One Shah Yahiya always kept on instigating Saiyad Ahmad Khan to indulge in such debaucheries and ill-treatment of the men and women of Orissa, who all in consequence were disgusted with him. Fed up of such indignations heaped upon them one after another during one year of Saiyad Ahmad's administration, the people of Orissa rose in revolt under the leadership of Mirza Baqar, son-in-law of Rustam Jang. Saiyad Ahmad Khan with his whole family was captured and imprisoned.[1] This clearly indicates that Saiyad Ahmad Khan 'was of a churlish disposition and regulated himself by avarice'.[2] Alivardi Khan soon succeeded in rescuing Saiyad Ahmad from the bonds of captivity[3] and appointed him the Faujdar of Hughli. There he picked up a quarrel with the Germans over the question of customs, when again, he could succeed in expelling the Germans only when Alivardi Khan sent Mir Jafar Khan for his help. Notwithstanding his failures, Alivardi Khan bestowed upon him the government of the city and province of Azimabad or Patna in 1749 A.D.[4] This appointment aroused the jealousy of Alivardi Khan's consort and also of his favourite grandson Sirajuddoula, who claimed hereditary right over Azimabad, for his father had been its Governor till then. Alivardi Khan was induced to instal Sirajuddoula in place of Saiyad Ahmad Khan, who answered such a ridicule and affront by resolving to quit

[1] Khan, Ghulam Hussain. *Sair-ul-Mutakharin*, Vol. I, Calcutta, ... (1902), pp. 359-363.

Salim, Ghulam Hussain. *Riyaz-us-Salatin*, Calcutta, ... (1902), pp 332-333.

[2] Ibid, p 332.

[3] Khan, Ghulam Hussain. Op. cit., p. 370.

[4] ———, *Sair-ul-Mutakharin*, Vol. II, Calcutta, ... (1902), p. 58.

Bengal and seek his fortune in the Imperial Court at Delhi.[1] Meanwhile disturbing reports about the oppressive conduct of Fakhruddin Hussain Khan, the Nawab of Purnea, were pouring in the Murshidabad Court. Ever-affectionate Alivardi Khan greedily seized the opportunity and, after soothing the wounded feelings of Saiyad Ahmad Khan through personal appeals, gave Purnea to him in full sovereignty.[2] Rich Khillat or dress along with other insignia was put on his person 'and to render the ceremony more pompous he added from his own an elephant, a serpich and Djica with a Calghi, a chaplet of pearls, and a variety of other jewels'.[3] Thus seen, Saiyad Ahmad Khan held a number of appointments prior to his coming over to Purnea, but on all occasions he proved a failure, which is in sharp contrast to his performances as the Faujdar of Purnea, where he greatly succeeded in redeeming his reputation.

His Daily Routine

As Faujdar of Purnea, Saiyad Ahmad Khan gave up the depraved habits of his young days and subjected himself to regular habits in his daily life. He apportioned his time in such a way as to be abled to devote proper attention to each duty, concerning not only statecraft but also his personal well-being both in this world and the world beyond. He left his bed an hour before day-break, and having finished the usual evacuations and ablutions, performed some worship of supererogation, after which he sat in state in the court hall. There he held public audience twice a week, being accessible to every suitor. On Friday he abstained from all business, but on other four days of the week, he devoted himself to it. His method of business was as follows :

After offering the morning prayers, he drank coffee in the company of friends and acquaintances and sat with them for about two hours. Then he retired to a closet, reputedly

[1] Ibid, pp. 65-68.

[2] Ibid, p. 96.

[3] Ibid, p. 74.

belonging to the sanctuary, to which none were admitted but some old women of the Zanana and some trusty eunuchs. His friends, courtiers, secretaries and heads of the different offices waited in a hall, separated from his closet by a curtain. They sent by the hands of the eunuchs any paper requiring his signature. These papers he examined in silence, and returned when he had passed orders on them. Fair copies were then made and depatched, courtiers being always ready in attendance. At 10 a.m. he had his dinner. He was fond of nice and delicious food. He never took his dinner unless selected dishes were sent to his friends and relatives. After dinner usually a siesta followed and then rising about noon he went through the usual evacuations and ablutions, made his noon prayers and read some chapters of the *Koran*. At about 3 p.m. he went into the public hall and discussed science and religion with the learned and pious men of his court for two hours. Whenever such discussions did not take place, he became uneasy, which could be cured only when the loss was made up by arranging similar discussions. After that he gave audience to his choice friends and distinguished officers of the government for an hour. When he spent some time with the favourite ladies of his seraglio in the garden taking an airing or enjoying ride upon small ponies. At night came his fourth prayer, after which he was entertained by actresses, dancers and singers, or by hearing some curious and diverting story or tale, which lulled him to sleep; and this was at about 9 or 10 O'clock.

'This rule of life', writes the author of *Sair-ul-Mutakharin*, 'held regularly the whole year round without exception.'[1]

Expedition Against the Khagra Zamindar

Saiyad Ahmad Khan governed Purnea for full seven years with absolute power, but in the words of Saiyad Ghulam Hussain Khan,

> 'Retired in a corner, at a distance from the great roads to and from Hindustan, he had no occasion at all either to wage war or to travel. So that his travels went no farther than Radjmahal, whither his uncle, who was very fond of hunting, used to repair almost every year; and sometimes he proceeded as far as Murshidabad, to see his brother, Navazish-Mahammad-qhan, and his nephews and nieces, as well as the Princesses of his family. Nor did he ever set out from Pooraniah in a military equipage, but on two occasions: the first time it was to oppose Fahr-eddin-hossein-qhan, that ill-advised son of Seif qhan's; the other, it was to chastise Shek-mahmuddjelil, Zamindar of Pooraniah.'[1]

[1] Khan, Ghulam Hussain. *Sair-ul-Mutakharin*, Vol. II, Calcutta, ... (1902), pp. 134-136.

Shaikh Muhammad Jalil was the Zamindar of Khagra, a large estate in Pargana Surjapur* in the northeast of the district with a land revenue demand of Rs 1,54,698. The family owning this estate has a long and interesting history traceable from A.H. 962, i.e. 1545 A.D., when Emperor Humayun by the grant of a Sanad conferred this estate together with the title of Kanungo on Saiyad Khan Dastur, the founder of the family. Saiyad Muhammad Jalil was the twelfth Zamindar in succession to Saiyad Khan Dastur.[2] Muhammad Jalil was a staunch Shiya and endowed with many valuable qualities. He was also favourably disposed towards doing meritorious works,[3] but as records go the Zamindars of Khagra from the very beginning never paid rent or revenue to the Faujdars of Purnea, but rendered military services instead,[4]

[1] Ibid, pp. 141-142.

* *See* Appendix C

[2] Buchanan, Francis. *An Account of the District of Purnea in 1809-10*, Patna, ... (1928), pp. 884-886.
Byrne, J. *Final Report on the Survey and Settlement Operations in the District of Purnea*—1901-08, Calcutta (1908), Appendix VI, p. II.
O'Malley, L. S. S. *Bengal District-Gazetteers—Purnea*, Calcutta (1911), p. 194.

[3] Khan, Ghulam Hussain. *Sair-ul-Mutakharin*, Vol. II, Calcutta, ... (1902), p. 142.

[4] Byrne, J. Op. cit., p. II.

and, therefore, when Saiyad Ahmad Khan demanded revenue from Saiyad Muhammad Jalil, he refused to do so. He was guided in his action also by the counsels of his friends, whom Ghulam Hussain Khan describes as 'senseless and ignorant'.[1] This refractory attitude on the part of the Khagra Raja excited the Faujdar's anger. Much against his wishes latter undertook an expedition against the Raja in the middle of the rains. The whole event ended in a very short time because the Khagra troops were intimidated by the very presenee of Saiyad Ahmad Khan and refused to stand by the Raja. He and all his family were taken prisoners and his estate was confiscated. He soon died in prison. The author of *Sair-ul-Mutakharin* has left an account of how he took a fancy for Saiyad Muhammad Jalil and had tried in vain to prevail upon him to change his course of action which ultimately proved fatal for him and his estate. Even after the death of the Raja he continued to make efforts for the welfare of his family and finally convinced Shaukat Jang, son and successor of Saiyad Ahmad Khan, who restored the State to the son of Saiyad Muhammad Jalil, in order that the latter might bring back the cultivators and repeople the half ruined country.[2]

Material Condition and the Revenue Administration

Saiyad Ahmad Khan ruled with so much equity and attention to the welfare of the subject, that both the nobles and husbandmen were exceedingly pleased with his government, and at all times ready to give it their applause. The result was that he left for his successor a great treasure behind him, consisting of jewels, furniture of silver and gold, precious fabrics, camels, elephants, horses, etc., and at least 45 lakhs in treasury. Raymond, the translator of *Sair-ul-Mutakharin*' estimates that his property was worth over a crore and that his annual savings were over 20 lakhs. He further wrote,

[1] Khan, Ghulam Hussain. Op. cit.

[2] ———, *Sair-ul-Mutakharin*, Vol. II, Calcutta, ... (1902), pp. 1 to 141-143.

'Add to all this the standing expenses for seven thousand infantry and as much cavalry, the artillery, a fleet of boats; a numerous court receiving salaries, a seraglio for five hundred women, a table, splendid and infinity of yearly clothes and jewels; as well as a legion of pensioners that received from five to a thousand rupees per month; and this aggregate of expenses cannot be rated at less than forty lacs more; in all sixty lacs and the translator has been assured by the writers of his treasury that his revenue amounted to fifty eight lacs. Fifty eight lacs!'[1]

According to James Grant, Saif Khan used to realise a sum of Rs 18,00,000 from the district and this continued even during the succeeding administration of Saiyad Ahmad Khan who ruled Purnea up to 1756.[2] Only a few abwabs or local levy were added to the standard assessment.[3] Mir Kasim's investigations in 1761 conclusively proved that the gross income of Purnea was Rs 21,09,415 and right from Saif Khan to Shaukat Jang, the successor of Saiyad Ahmad Khan, nobody ever paid that sum to the Provincial Treasury.[4] If we accept Raymond's figures to be correct huge savings were made by the Faujdars of Purnea. But even if we discount his figures, there is no doubt that like Saif Khan the rental of Saiyad Ahmad Khan was much more than the revenue paid by him. The revenue assessment at the close of his reign in 1756 was Rs 3,44,288. While his rental was Rs 18,00,000. Thus, there was a difference of Rs 14,55,712[5]

But if we accept Mir Kasim's figure of Rs 21,09,425 to be the rental, the difference of Rs 3,09,415 may further be added

[1] Khan, Ghulam Hussain. *Sair-ul-Mutakharin*, Vol. II, Calcutta, (1902), footnote 54 to 137.

[2] Firminger, W. K. *The Fifth Report*, Vol. II, Calcutta, ... (1917), p. 336

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid., p. 337.

[5] Mishra, Madaneshwar. *Some Aspects of the Land Revenue History of Purnea District (1971)*, p. 32

to the income of the Faujdar. Mir Kasim's investigations also reveal that Zamindars earned huge income from 'Sair duties'. There were several gunjes in Purnea—Alamganj, Maharajjanj, Dewanganj and others for example. The income from these was appropriated by the Faujdar and part of it was transmitted to Murshidabad Treasury. Thus viewed, there was a good deal of difference between the revenue assessment and the rents realised from Saiyad Ahmad Khan.[1] This means that Saiyad Ahmad Khan continued the prudent policy of Saif Khan—investing in Purnea what was earned from Purnea by way of revenue collections. All this bestowed prosperity and plenty over Purnea and Faujdar had no difficulty in leading a life of benevolence and generosity.

An Estimate of his Character

Ghulam Hussain Khan has described Saiyad Ahmad Khan's administration in eulogistic terms and has gone so far as to assert that it was marked by an all round lenity and that the Nawab was so careful to promote the comfort and welfare of his subjects, both nobles and husbandmen, that they were at all times ready to give to his government their unqualified applause.[2]

History reveals that in an oriental despotism the character of the administration is largely shaped by the personal example of the person at the helm of affairs. An attempt by Ghulam Hussain Khan to represent a comparative analysis of the virtues and vices of Saiyad Ahmad Khan with those of his two brothers Navazish Muhammad Khan and Zainuddin Ahmad Khan—gives us an idea of the character of Saiyad Ahmad Khan. He writes,

> 'He had a character that had the middle between his two brothers. He was handsomer than either, superior to both in many respects, their equal in most,

[1] Ibid., p. 33.

[2] Khan, Ghulam Hussain. *Sair-ul-Mutakharin*, Vol. II, Calcutta, ... (1902), p. 141.

> and their inferior in few, if any at all. In powers, riches, and influence, he was inferior to his elder brother, Nevazish-mahmed-qhan ; and in these sense he was likewise inferior to his younger brother, Zin-eddin-ahmed-qhan, to whom the possession of the important Government of Azim-abad naturally gave a great lustre ; he was, however, supposed to be richer than him. But on the other hand, he was thought to be somewhat below that standard in process and military talents, although undoubtedly superior in those to his elder. In the sweetness of his deportment, and also in knowledge and science, he was superior to both, but in firmness of temper, and in acuteness of discernment Zin-eddin-ahmed-qhan surpassed both his brothers.'[1]

Patron of Knowledge

Saiyad Ahmad Khan in his youth had been much addicted to amusements and pleasures derived out of music and dance, etc., in the company of fine women, but this turn of mind having brought upon him the disgrace during his rule over Orissa he corrected his way of life and attached to his person a number of friends distinguished by their birth, virtue or knowledge.

Saif Ali Khan ; son of Amir Khan and brother of Saif Khan ; Rohiuddin Hussain Khan, son of Saif Khan ; Naky Ali Khan, younger brother of Ghulam Hussain Khan and Mir Aliyar Khan, son of Saif Khan's sister were most considerable of his friends.[2] Everyday in the afternoon at about 3 O'clock he convened a conference of pious men and for two hours discussed with them science and religion. He became uneasy when such discussions did not take place. He often spent his leisure hours on studying the *Koran* and was a

[1] Khan, Ghulam Hussain. *Sair-ul-Mutakharin*, Vol. II, Calcutta, ... (1902), pp. 133-134.

[2] ——————, *Sair-ul-Mutakharin*, Vol. II, Calcutta, ... (1902), p. 136.

patron of learned men. A batch of eminent scholars such as Mulla Ghulam Yahiya, Mufty Ziaulla, Mir Wahed, Doctor Maulvi Lal Muhammad, Shaikh Hidayatulla, Saiyad Ahmad Hadi and Saiyad Ghulam Hussain Khan, the author of *Sair-ul-Mutakharin*, flourished in his court. He used to say,

> 'That at his age[1] to make new acquisitions in matters of knowledge was almost impossible, that he was satisfied with what little he had of it, and wanted no addition; but that reading and comprehending matters of knowledge seemed to add new life to his existence; and that he was so accustomed to that way of life, that when the conferences did not take place, as usual, he reckoned himself to have that day suffered a great loss in his treasury, and was uneasy until it was retrieved and made up.'[2]

Towards the end of his life two learned men from Persia; Agha Abdulla, the Prince of the learned Ones of Iran, who understood all sciences and especially those of the speculative kind; and Saiyad Muhammad Terbety; the learned and pious, arrived in his court and it was the intention of the prince to Honour them suitably in keeping with his traditions but he soon afterwards died without fulfilling his desire.[3]

His Relationship With His Subordinates

Saiyad Ahmad Khan was affectionately disposed towards his officers and ordinary servants and often went out of way to oblige them. He was pleased with magnificence, and fond of living nobly. Ghulam Hussain Khan writes,

> 'There was a certain district called Seripur, the rent of which was fixed at one hundred and eighty and some thousand rupees; and he conceived without any

[1] He was about sixty then—Vide Ibid., p. 41.

[2] Ibid., p. 135.

[3] Khan, Ghulam Hussain. *Sair-ul-Mutakharin*, Vol. II, Calcutta, ... (1902), p. 149.

> application from me, and even without my knowledge, the design of bestowing the collection of that revenue upon me.'[1]

Over and above this, Saiyad Ahmad Khan once sided with Naky Ali Khan, brother of Ghulam Hussain Khan, in a quarrel with Achant Ray, who was deputy to the Master of the artillery of Purnea, i.e. Shaukat Jung, son of Saiyad Ahmad Khan, and it was known that Achant Ray was favoured by Shaukat Jung in the said quarrel.[2]

Similarly, once Naky Ali Khan left Saiyad Ahmad Khan's services and sought employment with Sirajuddoula where he got nothing but frustration. Naky Ali Khan's behaviour was somewhat insulting to the Purnea Faujdar, but he was so kind that on Ghulam Hussain Khan's request he excused Naky Ali for his past conduct and readmitted him in his court.[3] 'Such kindness and attention', writes Ghulam Hussain Khan, 'so far from being usual from lords to their dependants, are hardly to be expected from fathers to their sons'.[4]

This brought into his service a batch of able officers and servants, whose zealous efforts largely contributed to the success of Saiyad Ahmad Khan's government. The most prominent among these officers were Khadim Hussain Khan[5] a great military commander and a future Faujdar of Purnea; Ajayab Ray and his son Sahaj Ray,[6] successively Prime Ministers or Ray-Rayan.[7] Jafar Kuli Khan, keeper of the Treasury[8], Shah

[1] Ibid., p. 140.

[2] Khan, Ghulam Hussain. Op. cit., p. 143.

[3] Ibid.; p. 93.

[4] Ibid., p. 140.

[5] Ibid., p. 74.

[6] Ibid., p. 136. Ajayali Ray had also been Saif Khan's Prime Minister.

[7] Ray-Rayan is a title given to Hindus only and signifies the Counsellor of Counsellors, Chief of Counsellors. *See* Khan, Ghulam Hussain. *Sair-ul-Mutakharin*, Vol. I, Calcutta, ... (1902), footnote 258, p. 281.

[8] Ibid., Vol. II, p. 136.

Muhammad Jahan Yar, one of the principal military commanders who had extra skill in physic,[1] Laly, the Colonel and a principal commander of the artillery,[2] Bund Ali Khan, the surgeon,[3] Ray Churaman, the secretary,[4] Mir Muhammad Massih, personal physician of the Faujdar,[5] and Mirza Daud, the Khansama or steward.[6]

The above list of officers shows that Saiyad Ahmad Khan had adopted the wise policy of enlisting the sympathy and support of the Hindus. Though he was careful to go through the daily round of prayers, like a good Musalman, yet at the same time he was a 'jovial soul, who could enjoy the *Basant Panchami*[7] and allow *Dussera* to have its due place among the festive occasions of the land.[8]

His Relationship With His Kinsmen

Saiyad Ahmad Khan's relationship with his kinsmen were generally cordial and affectionate, but there are evidences to show that at times he was pained to see his kinsmen taking part in sinful activities and on such occasions he became guilty of revengeful attitude.[9] He, however, always nursed a feeling of gratitude towards his uncle for indeed the latter on several occasions saved his life and prestige from disasters. Naturally, therefore, any adverse report about Alivardi's health and

[1] Ibid., p. 149.

[2] Ibid., p. 136.
A mohalla named Laly Chawani about one mile from Purnea town on the Ganga-Darjeeling Road still exists.

[3] Ibid., p. 148.

[4] Ibid., p. 136.

[5] Ibid., p. 108.

[6] Ibid., p. 136.

[7] O'Malley, L. S. S. *Bengal District Gazetteers—Purnea*, Calcutta (1911), p. 38.

[8] Khan Ghulam Hussain. Op. cit., p. 140.

[9] ————, *Sair-ul-Mutakharin*, Vol. II, Calcutta, ... (1902), p. 126.

happiness immensely disturbed him and he not only made all worldly efforts but also solemnly invoked divine assistance for his recovery. It is known how devotedly he prayed God when he received the news of Alivardi Khan falling ill while returning from Azimabad to Murshidabad.[1] Another instance in this context is when on request from his beloved brother Nawazish Muhammad Khan and his wife Mehrun Nisa Begham or Ghasiti Begham, he agreed to give his daughter's hands to Nafisa Begham's[2] adopted son Agha Baba[3] in marriage though at first he had declined to accept the match. It was also because he felt kindly for his kinsmen that he agreed to the proposal of solemnising the said marriage at Murshidabad, because it would have been quite harassing for his kinsmen to travel up to Purnea.[4] The untimely death of Ekramuddoula, younger brother of Sirajuddoula, however, led to the suspension of the marriage.[5] It is probably in the case of Sirajuddoula only that we find Saiyad Ahmad Khan having a feeling of detestation and hatred for a kinsmen. Such feelings found favour with him not only because Sirajuddoula was jealous of him and on the strength of being immensely loved by Alivardi Khan he tried to harm his cause, whenever possible, but also because Sirajuddoula was universally detested like Pharao for his 'insolencies, infamies and profligacies,'[6] as is apparent in the case of the treacherous murders of Hussain Ali Khan, Deputy of Governor of Dacca and his brother Haider Ali Khan (1754-55 A.D.), engineered by Sirajuddoula. This unhappy transaction made Saiyad Ahmad Khan still more uneasy for it had been

[1] Ibid., pp. 108-109.

[2] Nafisa Begham was mother of late Nawab Sarfaraz Khan of Bengal who had been slain at the battle of Gharia by Alivardi Khan in course of the latter's bid to capture the Masnad of Bengal. Ever since his death Nafisa Begham had been admitted to Nawazish Muhammad Khan's family with full respect and attention. *See* Ibid., p. 109.

[3] Agha Baba was posthumous son of Sarfaraz Khan. *See* Ibid.

[4] Khan, Ghulam Hussain. *Sair-ul-Mutakharin*, Vol. II, Calcutta, ... (1902), p. 109.

[5] Ibid., p. 118.

[6] Ibid., p. 122.

consented to by Alivardi Khan and Nawazish Muhammad Khan as well.[1] To quote Ghulam Hussain Khan,

> 'Saiyad Ahmad Khan was naturally a sweet-tempered man; and civility was so natural to him, that for full seven years, in which I have been in his service, I never remember to have heard him say a harsh word to anyone (whether high or low), or to have seen him guilty of an improper action.'[2]

Attempt to Secure Subadari of Bengal

Towards the end of his life, Saiyad Ahmad Khan appears to have engaged in intrigues to secure possession of Bengal on the death of Alivardi Khan, which was daily expected, as the latter was an extremely old man and had been attacked with dropsy. Calculating on such a contingency, Saiyad Ahmad Khan opened up negotiations with the Grand Vizir of the Emperor Alamghir II for the grant of the viceroyalty of Bengal, and devoted the resources of Purnea to collecting a large army with which to oppose the claims of Sirajuddoula.[3] In 1756, a few months before the death of Alivardi Khan, however, Saiyad Ahmad Khan himself suffered an acute pain in his head, which proved fatal. Since otherwise healthy, nobody ever thought that the pain would deprive him of his life. At first he tried to cure it by applying leeches to his head, as a result of which a good deal of blood and watery matter came out, but every part where an application of the leeches had been made, began to suppurate. By degrees the whole neck swelled. He then turned towards proper medical treatment, but the best efforts of the renowned physicians and surgeons like Doctor Mahisi Bund Ali and Shah Muhammad Jahan Yar failed to give him any relief. The matter that had caused swelling in the neck, soon struck up into the brain. The prayers by the saints and scholars for the Prince's well-being went in vain and his life

[1] Ibid., pp. 121-124.

[2] Khan, Ghulam Hussain. *Sair-ul-Mutakharin*, Vol. II, Calcutta, ... (1902), p. 136.

[3] O'Malley, L. S. S. *Bengal District Gazetteers—Purnea*, Calcutta (1911), p. 40.

could not be saved. He passed away from this world on 'the twentyfifth of the first Djemadi, in the year 1169, i.e. 26th of February, 1756. His dead body was buried in the Jafari Bagh a pleasant garden in Purnea.[1]

To summarise, we find that with the death of Saiyad Ahmad Khan, Purnea definitely passed from one age to another, from the age of acquisition and prosperity to the age of loss and decay. The age of glamourous and prestigeous territorial aggrandisement and peace and prosperity, which began with the advent of Saif Khan to the Faujdary of Purnea in 1722, lasted for about 35 years only. Saiyad Ahmad Khan during his rule of about seven years did all to consolidate the good work done by his great predecessor, Saif Khan. He dealt with the lawless elements with a hand of iron as in the case of the rebellious Zamindar of Khagra and established beyond doubt that he sincerely wished to redeem his lost prestige. As already shown, he greatly succeeded in doing so. He was greatly concerned with 'the comfort and welfare of his subjects, both nobles and husbandmen' and showered endless affections on his kinsmen and subordinates. Only towards the fag-end of his life, he started making efforts to secure the Subadary of Bengal. It is distressing to find how his son and successor, Shaukat Jang, failed to continue his father's benevolent policies and through his extremely audacious behaviour alienated and antagonised his trusted officers and servants. Quite unwisely he followed his father's footsteps in making a bid for the provincial overlordship and this brought him into conflict with Sirajuddoula, his cousin and the Nawab of Bengal. It is proposed to examine in the next chapter how Shaukat Jang and Sirajuddoula tried to pull wires in their favour and in the process endangered the future not only of Purnea but also of Bengal, indeed of the whole of India. This proved to be the beginning of an extremely painful end.

[1] Khan, Ghulam Hussain. *Sair-ul-Mutakharin*, Vol. II, Calcutta, ... (1902), pp. 147-151.
A place called Jafari Bagh still exists in the Purnea city area, but the garden as the name suggests, and the place where Saiyad Ahmad Khan was buried is not traceable.

CHAPTER V

INTERREGNUM—SHAUKAT JANG

ACCESSION

Saiyad Ahmad Khan had two sons, Shaukat Jang and Mirza Ramzani. Shaukat Jang, the elder one, succeeded his father as Faujdar of Purnea on 27th March, 1756.[1] The author of *Sair-ul-Mutakharin* informs us that soon after Saiyad Ahmad Khan's dead body was carried to the grave, Shaukat Jang 'came into the hall of audience, and pretending to be greatly affected or overcome with grief, he shed hypocritical tears, and, in token of desolation threw his turban on the ground. As I, poor man, was reputed a person of consequence in his father's court, I thought it incumbent upon me to act apart in such a moment of distress, and taking it up therefore, from the ground, I put it again upon his head, and rolled it properly, and then I made him sit down as chief mourner.'[2] Thereafter Shah Jahan Yar and several other military officers and distinguished persons were introduced to Shaukat Jang. They had gathered to condole the death of Saiyad Ahmad Khan and offered their services. This unmistakably shows how Shaukat Jang had inherited the unqualified support of the officers and distinguished persons attached to his father's court. Shaukat Jang, agreeing to Ghulam Hussain Khan's advice promised to shower favours on all of them. Shaukat Jang spent first three days of mourning in a specially created tent, but the extent of his grief on account of his father's death was apparently negligible for just on the second day of the mourning he was busy in procuring Alivardi Khan's concurrence to his accession. He got a letter of prayer to this purport drafted by Ghulam Hussain Khan and sent the same to the Nawab of Bengal.

[1] Khan, Ghulam Hussain. *Sair-ul-Mutakharin*, Vol. II, Calcutta, (1902), p. 151.

[2] Ibid., p. 152.

An ambitious and profligate youth, he had been a person of great weight and influence even in his father's lifetime. He had been Grand Master of Artillery at Purnea under his father and afterwards at Murshidabad under Alivardi Khan. The latter, it is said recognised his succession and in order to pacify and, if possible, buy off such a formidable claimant to the throne of Bengal, which he had destined for Sirajuddoula, bestowed on him the whole of Purnea in perpetual Jagir or a revenue-free grant[1] and at the same time conjured him to be content with his portion, to live upon amicable terms with all his relations, to support his father's attendants and to love his subjects as his own children[2]. Shaukat Jang at any rate, did not oppose the succession of his cousin, Sirajuddoula, but waited for an opportunity to assert his claims. His entire rule of about seven months was consumed by incessant conflict with Sirajuddoula first in the form of cold war and later on open warfare. This struggle for supremacy forms an interregnum between the period of peace and prosperity and the period of decay followed by attempts to provide some sort of a rural administration to Purnea.

RIVALRY WITH SIRAJUDDOULA

Ever since his accession to the Masnad of Bengal (April, 1756) Sirajuddoula was determined to make his position secure by removing from his path his most formidable rival Shaukat Jang. With this purpose the former marched towards Purnea within a month of his accession and arrived at Rajmahal. Shaukat Jang was taken by surprise and his favourites and ministers were seized with panic. Instead of taking the field, therefore, he begged the religious and pious men to avert the invasion by their prayers and sent a message to Sirajuddoula acknowledging him as his suzerain. Sirajuddoula, on the other hand, received disturbing reports from Calcutta where the English were adding to the fortifications of

[1] Stewart, Charles. *The History of Bengal*, Delhi (1971), p. 497.

[2] Ibid.

Khan, Ghulam Hussain. Op. cit., p. 153.

Fort William and had given refuge to Krishnaballabh, the son of Rajballabh, who had given a slip to the guards, sent to seize him at Dacca. Furthermore, his soldiers were afraid to cross the Ganges, believing that Shaukat Jang had been reinforced by the Imperial troops; while his captains dissuaded him from attempting a campaign in the rains when the country would be under water. He instantly changed his resolution of marching to Purnea and turned aside to crush the English merchants of Calcutta with a view to secure his rear.[1]

Procuring Imperial Farman

It has already been seen that Saiyad Ahmad Khan had been intriguing at the Delhi Imperial Court for a *farman* granting him the Viceroyalty of Bengal. After his father's death, Shaukat Jang continued his work and secured from the unprincipled Imperial Wazir Ghaziuddin Imadul-Mulk permission to wrest Bengal, Bihar and Orissa from Sirajuddoula, by promising him to send to Delhi the confiscated treasure of Sirajuddoula and to remit annually one crore of rupees as tribute.[2] This greatly irritated Sirajuddoula.

A Greater Conspiracy

The administration of Shaukat Jang is largely a story of his quarrels with Sirajuddoula and the historians have unanimously apportioned all the responsibilities for losing Bengal to alien powers solely to these two young grandsons of Alivardi Khan. The subsequent unfolding of the pages of history, however, establishes the fact that these two headless princes were mere actors in the drama that formed a part of the conspiracy hatched by Mir Jafar and others, in order to bring about a

[1] Khan, Ghulam Hussain. *Sair-ul-Mutakharin*, Vol. II, Calcutta ... (1902), p. 187.

Stewart, Charles. *The History of Bengal*, Delhi (1971), p. 499.

Sarkar, Jadunath (Editor). *The History of Bengal*, Vol. II, Dacca (1948), p. 478.

[2] ————, *The History of Bengal*, Vol. II, Dacca (1948), p. 478.

revolution to destroy Sirajuddoula's authority.[1] Soon after Alivardi's death (10th April, 1756), Mir Jafar wrote a secret letter to Shaukat Jang urging him to invade Bengal and assuring him of the support of himself and the large revolutionary party of Murshidabad, who were eager for deliverance from Sirajuddoula's tyranny. Mir Jafar wrote,

> '... as the enterprise was easy, and it only wanted someone to sit on the throne, in which case all the others would undertake to place him thereon, under certain conditions and stipulations.'[2]

Already being in possession of Imperial *farman*, Mir Jafar's prompting worked miraculously and loquacious as Shaukat Jang was, he openly talked in Darbar of his wild ambition to conquer Bengal, to extend his empire up to such distant places as Ghazni and Kandhar, to subdue Shujauddaula, the ruler of Oudh and Shaibuddin Imadulmulk, the son of Wazir Ghaziuddin Imadulmulk, to place on the throne of Delhi an Emperor of his own liking and to make his home at Khorasan, as the climate of Bengal did not suit him.[3]

Shaukat Jang Offends the Old Officers of His Court

Before proceeding to relate the hostilities between Shaukat Jang and Sirajuddoula, it is worthwhile to mention that Shaukat Jang like Sirajuddoula, gave offence to the old officers, who had long served under his father or grandfather. Right from the moment of his accession, he gave specimens of his profligacy and supineness and commenced piking up quarrels with principal officers and commanders of the old court. Most of them were dismissed or downgraded for the childish reason of having disobeyed him during his father's time. He, however,

[1] Salim Ghulam Hussain. *Riyaz-us-Salatin*, Calcutta, ... (1902), footnote, p. 367.

[2] Khan, Ghulam Hussain. *Sair-ul-Mutakharin*, Vol. II, Calcutta, ...(1902), p. 196.

Stewart, Charles. *The History of Bengal*, Delhi (1971), p. 498.

[3] Khan, Ghulam Hussain. Op. cit., p. 197.

never took notice of the fact that most of the time such disobediences were unavoidable as his orders were contrary to those of his father.

Lally

One day without any context it came to his mind to seize and confine Lally, the capable and courageous Hindu commander of the artillery, whom Saiyad Ahmad Khan used to treat with utmost regard and distinction and in spite of convincing remonstrances from Ghulam Hussain Khan the author of the *Sair-ul-Mutakharin* who acted as the Nawab's Chief adviser, and some other persons, Shaukat Jang proceeded with his design. Being bribed by the Faujdar, Lally's men deserted their commander and got enrolled in other corps. Lally was stripped off his rank and Saifuddin Muhammad Khan, two-day old son of the Nawab, was appointed in his place. Even greater affronts were heaped on Lally when he was mercilessly whipped like a man of the street and put under confinement. All his property was confiscated and soon he was condemned to exile.[1] Owing to such acts his court became a veritable centre of mistrust and confusion.

Mir Mali Khan and Habib Begh

Though he was incapable of directing even his own domestics he would not listen to the advice of the sensible persons in his court, who were sincere well-wishers of his family, but consulted only the rash and profligate beings of his own creation. The delirious and light-headed Mir Mali Khan, an old friend of Mir Jafar Khan, and a brother of one of the concerts of Oudh's sovereign Sadat Khan ; and whimsical and profligate Habib Begh, who had for long been in the service of Alivardi Khan, but since thrown out by Sirajuddoula, suddenly appeared in Shaukat Jang's court and acquired complete command over his brain.[2] They filled his mind with talks of

[1] Khan, Ghulam Hussain. *Sair-ul-Mutakharin*, Vol. II, Calcutta ... (1902), pp. 197-199.

[2] ————, *Sair-ul-Mutakharin*, Vol. II, Calcutta ... (1902), p. 196.

idle and wild fancy and took care to keep alive his vainglorious attitude. These two and others who had been the companions of his boyish pastimes, were contriving opportunities to get from him rich dresses of honour, elephants, horses, jewels and new office.[1] Indeed, Mir Mali Khan was appointed Faujdar of Sirniya, Nawabganj and other places.[2] Habib Begh was busy doing everything to completely root out the influence, what little of it had been left, of the well-intentioned officers of the court, by misrepresenting facts before the Nawab and thereby convincing him that his officers were conspiring to betray him. Actually once the officers, with a view to correct the ways of the Nawab, who frequently used indecent language while addressing them in the open court, resolved in one of their assemblies to forbid the Nawab with threats to stop use of such language. Luckily the thoughtlessness of the Nawab gave way to sensibility and he promised to act accordingly. Over and above, when he came to know that Habib Begh used to transmit incorrect information to him about his officers, he himself became aversed to him. Habib Begh was left with no alternative than to leave Purnea. Shaukat Jang had, however, merely temporized, for he soon appointed armed guards with orders to prevent any armed men from entering his place. This clearly revealed that he continued to mistrust his officers, who on their part responded by refusing to go to the court and in utter helplessness the Nawab was obliged to repeal his orders.[3] Shaukat Jang's ridiculous behaviour had full bearing on the future course of events, because his dissatisfied military commanders had hardly anything but their apathy to offer to his uninspiring leadership when a clash of arms took place between him and Sirajuddoula.

Fresh Hostilities

During the temporary cessation of hostilities with English, Sirajuddoula once again turned towards Shaukat Jang, who

[1] Ibid., p. 198.

[2] Ibid., p. 200.

[3] Khan, Ghulam Hussain. *Sair-ul-Mutakharin*, Vol. II, Calcutta ... (1902), pp. 202-203.

was by then in possession of the Imperial *farman* and had assumed the title of 'Alam Panah' or the Nawab refuge of the world.[1] The Nawab of Bengal in order to try the allegiance of his cousin, and to put an end to his pretensions to the Masnad of Bengal and even more, appointed Ras Bihari, younger brother of Raja Durlabhram and son of Raja Janakiram to the charge of the parganas of Birnagar and Gondwara in Purnea district which pertained to the Bengal Nizamat, and wrote a letter to Shaukat Jang to put him immediately in possession of the said office. When this letter was received, Ghulam Hussain Khan, the principal adviser of Shaukat Jang was consulted. He advised his master to temporise, to treat Ras Bihari with outward courtesy, to mobilise troops, and to pass in this way till the rainy season was over, when it was expected[2] that the English would also fight against Sirajuddoula and then Shaukat Jang's turn would come to act and advance, as time and occasion should point out. However, that may be so, Shaukat Jang did not pay heed to the above advice and passionately resenting the interference with his authority, publicly flogged the messanger who brought the letter, and sent a characteristic reply, which he first had read out in court. His reply was brief and to the point, the purport of which was as follows :

> 'I have received from the Imperial Court the patent of the three provinces of Bengal, Behar and Oressa, in my own name ; but as there subsists a brotherhood and a parentage between us, I forbear meddling with your life, and shall assign for your subsistence any part in the province of Djehangir-nugur-dacca, which you shall like, and point out, and the patent of it I shall expedite, whenever you please. Meanwhile do retire into those parts, and leave the palace, treasury, and furniture to

[1] Khan, Ghulam Hussain. *Sair-ul-Mutakharin*, Vol. II, Calcutta, ... (1902), p. 200.

[2] The basis of such expectation was possibly Ghulam Hussain Khans' friendly relations with the English. *See* Salim, Ghulam Hussain. *Riyaz-us-Salatin*, Calcutta, ... (1902), footnote 1, p. 367.

> my officers ; and take care to send me your answer speedily, as I am waiting for it with a foot in the stirrup.'[1]

Ghulam Hussain Salim, the author of *Riyaz-us-Salatin*, however, has to tell slightly different story than what has been said by Ghulam Hussain Khan in his *Sair-ul-Mutakharin* and repeated by Stewart in his *History of Bengal*, in this connection. He does not make any mention of Sirajuddoula's first march against Shaukat Jang and his subsequent retreat from Rajmahal to meet the challenge of the English. Instead, he says that soon after Shaukat Jang's accession to the Faujdari of Purnea Sirajuddaula, desirous of displacing him demanded the revenue of Purnea to which Shaukat Jang replied as follows :

> 'You are lord of three Subahs (Provinces), whilst I am fallen in this corner, and am content with a bit of bread. Now it does not become your high aspiration to set the teeth of your avarice on this bit of bread.'[2]

The account in the *Sair-ul-Mutakharin* is more reliable, as its author was attached at the time as a chief adviser to Shaukat Jang. All the same, Sirajuddoula decided to deliver his answer at once and in person. He ordered his army to advance in two divisions, one of which, under his own command marched up the right bank of the Ganges to Rajmahal, while the other, under Raja Mohan Lal, together with other generals such as Dost Muhammad Khan, Shaikh Din Muhammad, Mir Muhammad and Jafar Khan, Mir Kasim Khan, Diler Khan and Asalat Khan followed the left bank of that river to fall upon the enemy near Samada, Basantpurgola and Hayatpur (i.e. striking the eastern bank of the old Kosi). Sirajuddoula's forces were swelled by the injunction of Ramnarayan, whom Alivardi Khan had made Deputy Governor of Patna, and the auxiliaries of Sundar Singh and many Bihar Zamindars, and outnumbered

[1] Khan, Ghulam Hussain. *Sair-ul-Mutakharin*, Vol. II, Calcutta, ... (1902), pp. 204-206.

Stewart, Charles. *The History of Bengal*, Delhi (1971), p. 506.

[2] Salim, Ghulam Hussain. *Riyaz-us-Salatin*, Calcutta (1902), p. 367.

the Purnea army as two to one.[1] The conflict that ensued took place at Baldiabari, about a mile and half from Nawabganj (four miles north of Manihari) in pargana Kankjol. According to W. W. Hunter, 'the account given of it in the *Sair-ul-Mutakharin* is one of the best descriptions of a battle scene to be found in the Musalman historians'.[2]

The Weaknesses of Shaukat Jang's Army

Meantime Shaukat Jang's forces had arrived and taken up an entrenched position at Nawabganj, where the deserted old bed of the Kosi river formed a hairpin-bend, about 30 miles south of Purnea town and ten miles north of the Ganges. This loop of stagnant marshes supplied a natural barrier to the Purnea troops, on the north, east and south. The rear of the position, being open to a productive country, insured an ample supply of provisions to the camp. But Shaukat Jang's army was only half the size of his rival's force, and to add to his misfortune, his past conduct had so thoroughly estranged his generals from him and the faithful old leaders from his unworthy favourites that they encamped in distant isolation from one another. Shyam Sundar[3], a Bengali Kayastha, commanded the field artillery of Shaukat Jang, but he issued from the lakes and took post in the plain without any natural defence before him, a mile in front of his side on their east. Some four miles west of him, behind the lakes lay the quarters of the regular cavalry and other troops under the old captains of Purnea, in a position where any help from their own artillery was impossible. The Nawab's tents were pitched in the centre, about a mile west of the artillery and three miles east of his cavalry. As a matter of fact Shaukat Jang, out of his mistrust for his officers, never

[1] Ibid., p. 368.
Khan, Ghulam Hussain. *Sair-ul-Mutakharin*, Vol. II. Calcutta, ... (1902), p. 206.
Stewart, Charles. *The History of Bengal*, Delhi (1971), pp. 506-507.

[2] Hunter, W. W. *A Statistical Account of Bengal*, Vol. XV, London (1877), p. 224.

[3] There is still a place near Captain Bridge on the N.H. 931 at a distance of about two miles from Purnea town, known as Shyamsundar Chawani.

wanted them as his neighbours even when face-to-face with the enemy. Furthermore, he instead of daily reviewing his troops, did not join the army till the advanced parties of the enemy appeared in sight.[1] When at last Shaukat Jang came to the camp, he was attended by bodyguard of cavalry which he had raised himself, a corps of 400 horse commanded by his brother Mirza Ramzani Hadi Ali Khan Jasarat Jang. and a regiment of 1000 matchlock-men. As soon as he arrived, the principal commandars and officers such as Karguzar Khan, the Commander-in-Chief, his nephew Shan Jahan Yar, Shah Abdul Rashid, Mir Sultan Khalil Khan, Mohammad Saiyad Khan, Saiyad Ghulam Hussain Khan, his brother, Naqui Ali Khan and Omar Khan waited on him to pay their respects, but even at that time instead of ingratiating himself with them by his complaisance, he added to their disgust by the moroseness of his behaviour ; nor would he give them any orders for their conduct, but desired them to return to their respective encampments and there await his commands. In this manner his army of good troops destitute of a Chief Commander for Shaukat Jang refused to entrust the command to anyone else and did not know how to marshall the forces himself—and affronted to the maximum, encamped in two distinct portions, thus making concerted action impossible.[2]

The Battle of Baldiabari

The clash of arms took place on the twenty-first of Djemadi, in the year 1170 A.H., i.e. 16th October, 1756 A.D. One-third of the day had already passed when the flags of Sirajuddoula's advanced division under the command of Raja Mohanlal and Mir Jafar were soon moving into the plain outside the village of Manihari, about three miles south of the Purnea troops. Leaving their tents and baggage on the bank of the Ganga, in

[1] Khan, Ghulam Hussain. *Sair-ul-Mutakharin*, Vol. II, Calcutta, ... (1902), pp. 206-209.
Salim, Ghulam Hussain. *Riyaz-us-Salatin*, Calcutta, ... (1902), p. 368.
Stewart, Charles. *The History of Bengal*, Delhi (1971), pp. 507-508.

[2] Ibid., p. 508.
Khan, Ghulam Hussain. Op. cit., pp. 208-209.

the rear, the invaders drew up their forces carefully and in proper order. At first there was the usual futile long distance cannonade. But after two hours bigger guns arrived on the Bengal side and their shots began to fall near trenches, and a few occasionally inside them. One of them passed across Shaukat Jang who was much alarmed. He ordered the standards and other insignia of his dignity, i.e. the Mahi[1], to be lowered down.[2] A different account, however, is given by Ghulam Hussain Salim. According to him when Raja Mohanlal advanced with his force in order to fight and unfurled his flag carrying the insignia of the Mahi order, Shaukat Jang fancied that Sirajuddoula himself had joined his army and was marching up for fight and so he also advanced with his army. That being an inauspicious day, Shaikh Jahan Yar dissuaded Shaukat Jang to defer fighting for next day, but in vain.[3] There is no mention of this incident in *Sair-ul-Mutakharin*, but there is the description of how Omar Khan, an old Afghan Officer, drew Shaukat Jang's attention to the utter disorder that prevailed in his camp and described to him the orderly battalions which Nizamul Mulk, the great commander of the Deccan, led into battle. Shaukat Jang took ill of the remonstrance, abused that officer as well as the Nizamul Mulk as block-heads and said, 'I have no occasion to be taught what I am to do, for I have fought myself three hundred battles.'[4]

Shaukat Jang kept frantically sending courier after courier to his captains, three miles away on his right, with orders to issue from their trenches and charge the Bengal army, but they sent back replies declining to make any such wild movement, as they would be mowed down by the Bengal artillery while

[1] Figure of a fish, four feet in length, in copper gilt, carried horizontally on the point of spear.
Khan, Ghulam Hussain. *Sair-ul-Mutakharin*, Vol. II, Calcutta, ... (1902), p. 210.

[2] Ibid.
Stewart, Charles. *The History of Bengal*, Delhi (1971), p. 509.

[3] Salim, Ghulam Hussain. *Riyaz-us-Salatin*, Calcutta, ... (1902), p. 368.

[4] Khan, Ghulam Hussain. *Sair-ul-Mutakharin*, Vol. II, Calcutta, ... (1902) p. 509.
Stewart, Charles. *The History of Bengal*, Delhi. (1971), p. 509.

trying to cross the big swamp in front of them, without any artillery protection.[1] Only Shyamsundar, the Hindu commander of the artillery, who was possessed of great personal courage and bravery, but no experience, quitted his entrenchment behind the morass and advanced over the causeway to the other side, where he commenced a cannonade. Shaukat Jang thereupon, sent another message to his captains that they were a set of cowards and contemptuously compared the conduct of his Musalman horsemen with the courage of the Hindu scribe, as he called Shyam Sundar. A great deal of time passed in this kind of wrangling. At last, some highborn Shia captains, stung to the quick by Shaukat Jang's taunts, determined to set out to deliver a charge whatever the hazards. They had crossed only half the morass and were still struggling with the mud in loose broken formation, when the Bengal artillery and musketeers from their safe position on the opposite bank began to shoot them down. Shaukat Jang, on his part, after giving his last message, took his midday inebriated draught, i.e. *bhang*, and retired, as was his wont, to his tent to amuse himself with the songs of his women. Meanwhile the battle had gone against him in all directions. Many of the Purnea troops were slain and wounded, many who had reached the other bank were captured, the rest broke, recrossed the morass and fled away without having once had the chance of drawing their swords. Abdul Rashid, Mohammad Saiyad Khan and Mir Sultan Khalil lost their lives and Ali Naqui Khan and Habib Begh, having received serious injuries, were captured by the enemies. The valourous commanders Dost Mohammad Khan, Shah Mohammad Yar Khan and Shyamsundar retreated after performing heroically, though in vain. In short, Shaukat Jang's artillery had been silenced and his cavalry cut to pieces, without inflicting much injury on the enemy.[2]

[1] Khan, Ghulam Hussain. Op. cit., pp. 210-211.

[2] Khan, Ghulam Hussain. *Sair-ul-Mutakharin*, Vol. II, Calcutta, ... (1902), pp. 211-213.
Stewart, Charles. *The History of Bengal*, Delhi (1971), pp. 509-510.
Hunter, W. W. *A Statistical Account of Bengal*, Vol. XV, London, ... (1877), p. 225.

SHAUKAT JANG'S DEATH

At this critical time, some of his officers came to him, and placed him on an elephant with a servant to support as he was reeling with intoxication and could not sit upright. But as his presence was requisite to encourage the sagging moral of the fleeing troops he was made to advance towards the causeway. Seeing the general rout of the Purnea forces, some of the trusted men and relatives of the Nawab, such as Mir Mardan Ali, the commander of his bodyguards, Madan Lal, the commander of the foot guards, Mirza Ramzani, brother of the Nawab and Saifuddin Ahmad Khan, the son of the Nawab who had succeeded Lally, all fled away from the battlefield. Shaukat Jang was left with only fourteen men, one of them being Saiyad Ghulam Hussain Khan, the author of *Sair-ul-Mutakharin*. The Nawab, however, had only advanced as far as the middle of the morass, when a musket ball struck him in the forehead and killed him. His jewelled turban rolled down to the ground and the contest was over.[1]

Ghulam Hussain Salim's version in this connection is slightly variant. According to him Shaukat Jang in full consciousness advanced to charge a body of troops in which he thought he saw Sirajuddoula. The latter, however, did not take part in the battle, but remained in the rear, sending Miran, the son of Mir Jafar Khan, dressed like himself to deceive the enemy. Shaukat Jang, as a matter of fact, advanced against the enemy in full cry discharging arrows. He shattered the front tooth of Dost Muhammad Khan by fixing a sharp arrow there. As decreed by fate, however, a bullet from the gun of a servant of Dost Mohammad Khan hit Shaukat Jang on the forehead and he died (October 16, 1756).[2]

After the death of Shaukat Jang his forces made little further stand, though they appear to have given a good

[1] Khan, Ghulam Hussain. *Sair-ul-Mutakharin*, Vol. II, Calcutta, ... (1902), pp. 212-213.
Stewart, Charles. *The History of Bengal*, Delhi (1971), p. 510.

[2] Salim, Ghulam Hussain. *Riyaz-us-Salatin*, Calcutta, ..(1902), pp. 368-369.

account of themselves, in spite of their disadvantages. According to the account of S. C. Mill, Sirajuddoula had 5000 killed and wounded.[1] The battle ended with the fall of night, when Shaukat Jang's forces dispersed, unpursued by the enemy. To quote from *Sair-ul-Mutakharin* :

> 'Without hinderance from the peasants of Purnea, who were not courageous enough to come down in numbers and to plunder the living, or strip the dead, as they do in Hindostan.'[2]

Sirajuddoula received the tidings of victory at Rajmahal where he immediately ordered the music of victory to strike up. He also awarded the captured men of Shaukat Jang's army with various punishments.[3] Two or three days later he returned in triumph to Murshidabad, appointing Raja Mohanlal as Faujdar of Purnea.

CHARACTER

An instructive account of Shaukat Jang's character has been given by Saiyad Ghulam Hussain Khan. He has as little good to say of him as he has of his cousin Sirajuddoula. He was in good position to judge, for he was the personal adviser of Shaukat Jang. He gives a quaint account of his duties in that capacity,

> 'Like the Vazir (i.e. the Queen[4]) in the game of Chess, I was close to a wooden king, that could neither think, nor act, by himself. I was obliged to read him lessons about signing papers, giving audience, and supporting a character in public... He could neither read fluently, nor write legibly ; so that I was obliged to be both his school master, and his Minister. I was obliged to direct his pen, teach him that Aba was written with two

[1] O'Mally, L. S. S. *Bengal District Gazetteers—Purnea*, Calcutta (1911), p. 43.

[2] Khan, Ghulam Hussain. *Sair-ul-Mutakharin*, Vol. II, Calcutta, ... (1902), p. 214.

[3] Salim, Ghulam Hussain. Op. cit., p. 369.

[4] Khan, Ghulam Hussain. *Sair-ul-Mutakharin*, Vol. II, Calcutta, ... (1902), footnote, p. 194.

As and a B, and to tell him how to join A to the next letter, and a syllable to a syllable, and how to keep his words asunder'.[1]

INORDINATE VAIN

Shaukat Jang was not only ignorant, but inordinately vain too. One day, for instance, on receiving a petition from Mir Mali Khan addressing him as Alam Panah or Refuge of the World, he gave orders that should always be his official title, and actually informed the Grand Vazir of the Emperor that, if he was addressed in any other way, he would tear the letter to shreds and give no answer.[2] This leads to the only conclusion that he suffered from megalomenia.[3]

EXPEDITION AGAINST RANGPUR

As already seen he was a vainfool who through his absurd and irritating acts alienated his sensible ministers and commanders and subjected himself to such advices as were calculated to bestow disasters on him and his people, or else why should he have needed to Mir Mali Khan's proposal, and ordered his troops to advance to take possession of Rangpur amidst the height of the rainy season. Quite expectedly none, but Mir Mali Khan complied with this order and that also only to realise later the folly involved in the measure.[4]

INSOLENT BEHAVIOUR

As to his morals, although he did not seem vicious, yet he dressed and spoke like a woman.

> 'It was observed that although he made use of the most obscene and most infamous language when speaking to his commanders and officers, he gave his

[1] Ibid., pp. 194-195.

[2] Khan, Ghulam Hussain. *Sair-ul-Mutakharin*, Vol. II, Calcutta,...(1902), pp. 200-201.

[3] O'Malley, L. S. S. *Bengal District Gazetteers—Purnea*, Calcutta (1911), p. 45.

[4] Khan, Ghulam Hussain. Op. cit., p. 201.

> household people no other abuse than that used by women, and such are, for instance, the expressions of Ningori, Ningora, Niputri, Niputra, Nikhasmi, Sirmundi, Khandi, which signify : relationless woman or man, childless woman or man, husbandless, hairless, or head-shaved, she-laughter, and to be shaved, or without a head of hair, is a great approbrium amongst all kinds of women, and to laugh is accounted a piece of levity amongst women of distinction, who are allowed only to smile.'[1]

He used to hurl low and obscene language upon everyone whatever without distinction, and that too, in the fullest hall of audience.[2] Even more, he spoke irreverantly of his ancestors and mentioned them in very indecent language. One day talking about his fancied victory over Bengal, he said to Karguzar Khan, his generalissimo that in such an event the latter would complement him with the pay of his subsequently enhanced troops. The generalissimo intelligently answered that they should get enough booty not to grudge to part with a portion of their pittance. Upon this what Shaukat Jang had to say was characteristic of him :

> 'You are mistaken, I am not such a sot as Alivardi Khan, who always used to give to his men everything that was found in an enemy's camp. For my part, I will not part to them. With so much as a handful of straw, above their pay.'[3]

EXPECTING FIDELITY FROM LALLY

The impudence in Shaukat Jang's character is further revealed when after inflicting a great deal of injury to the pride and honour of Lally, that distinguished Hindu officer of his father's court, he on hearing the news of the latter having

[1] Khan, Ghulam Hussain. *Sair-ul-Mutakharin*, Vol. II, Calcutta, ... (1902), footnote, p. 190.

[2] Ibid., p. 201.

[3] Ibid., p. 200.

favourably responded to an invitation from Murshidabad court, audaciously expressed his mind thus in the public,

> 'if Lally had been capable of such a treason, after all the rights which the deceased Prince, his father, had acquired over that officier's gratitude, there was no expecting fidelity from anyone else.'[1]

Saiyad Ghulam Hussain Khan aptly comments as follows :

> 'Strange indeed, that Shaukat Jang should remember so well the favours conferred by his father on that officer, and should forget at the same time the disgraces and injustices he had himself so recently heaped upon him ! Strange indeed, that after such a behaviour, he should expect gratitude and fidelity at the man's hands.'[2]

COMPARED WITH SIRAJUDDOULA

True 'to mention all his rediculous and thoughtless actions would require volumes, and a pity it would be to consume ink and paper upon such a subject'.[3] Shaukat Jang had all the vices of his rival Sirajuddoula, the same ignorant pride, insane ambition, uncontrollable passions, looseness of tongue and addiction to drink. He had no doubt greater personal courage than his craven cousin and recklessly courted death in battle, but his few loyal and capable servants failed to do him any good owing to his capricious levity and insane obstinacy. Sirajuddoula treated his devoted partisans better, and thus could achieve some success through them. Such was the state of affairs as induced Saiyad Ghulam Hussain Khan to write,

> 'it having been decreed by Providence, that the guilty race of Aaly-Verdy-qhan should be deprived of an Empire that had cost so much toil in rearing ; of course,

[1] Khan, Ghulam Hussain. *Sair-ul-Mutakharin*, Vol. II, Calcutta, ... (1902), p. 203.

[2] Ibid., p. 203.

[3] Ibid., pp. 203-204.

> it was in its designs that the three provinces of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa should be found to have for masters two young men equally proud, equaly incapable, and equally cruel, Seradj-ed-doulah, and Shaocat-djang, in consequence of their behaviour, equally cruel and thoughtless, smoke was already seen to rise from out of Aaly-Verdy-qhan's generation and house.'[1]

RAJA MOHANLAL

Shaukat Jang's death was followed by an event of great magnitude, so far as its consequences were concerned, in the history of Bengal, i.e. the Battle of Plassey in June 1757. In between the two events Purnea showed signs of recovery. Quite early in his reign Sirajuddoula had raised one of his most faithful and capable officer Mohanlal, the Kashmiri, to the position of a peshkar of his diwankhana, with the title of Maharaja and a degree of influence which turned him in effect into his Prime Minister (April 1756).[2] After defeating Shaukat Jang, Sirajuddoula appointed this Mohanlal as Faujdar of Purnea[3] and sent him along with Mir Kazim and his corps to take possession of Shaukat Jang's treasures and effects.[4] The few days[5] that Mohanlal remained at Purnea in collecting wealth and property including fifty-one elephants and many horses and camels[6] as well as women and children belonging to the deceased, or to his father Saiyad Ahmad Khan and despatched them all to Murshidabad.[7] Saif Khan's son Rohiuddin

[1] Khan, Ghulam Hussain. *Sair-ul-Mutakharin*, Vol. II, Calcutta, ... (1902), p. 189.

[2] Ibid., p. 187.

[3] O'Malley, L. S. S. *Bengal District Gazetteers—Purnea*, Calcutta, (1911), p. 44.

[4] Khan, Ghulam Hussain. *Sair-ul-Mutakharin*, Vol. II, Calcutta, ... (1902), p. 215.

[5] Ibid., p. 218.

[6] Salim, Ghulam Hussain. *Riyaz-us-Salatin*, Calcutta, ... (1902), p. 369.

[7] Khan, Ghulam Hussain. Op. cit., p. 218.
Stewart, Charles. *The History of Bengal*, Delhi (1971), p. 510.

Khan Sipahdar Jang, a future Nawab of Purnea and a son-in-law of Saiyad Ahmad Khan, was also sent to Murshidabad with full regard and honour.[1] Mohanlal soon regulated the administration and the finances and established order in the country. He himself then left for the provincial capital leaving behind his son to act as his deputy.[2] Hunter, however, mentions the name of Rai Nekraj Khan as the immediate successor of Shaukat Jang.[3] It is difficult to identify the last named in the absence of records.

To summarise, Shaukat Jang's rule was a dividing line between the age of peace and prosperity on the one hand and the age of decay on the other in the history of Purnea. The Faujdars of Purnea from Saif Khan to Shaukat Jang were all connected by ties of friendship or kinship with the Nawab of Bengal and naturally this was a great source of strength to them and they at times ignored the Nawab or the latter did not like to interfere in their affairs lest it gave rise to family troubles or intrigues and the affairs of the Faujdary were looked more or less as private affair.[4] While this advantageous position was exploited by Saif Khan and Saiyad Ahmad Khan to strengthen the material conditions of the people of Purnea, Shaukat Jang disastrously utilised it only to give troubles to his officers and servants. Quite diplomatically Saif Khan and Saiyad Ahmad Khan had pursued a policy of avoiding confrontation with the Nawabs of Bengal and thus saved their energy which were diverted for the betterment of the people of Purnea. Shaukat Jang, on his part, did all to excite Sirajuddoula to set out on an expedition against Purnea. The course of history might have favourably changed for Bengal, and indeed for India, had

[1] Khan, Ghulam Hussain. Op. cit.

[2] Ibid.
Salim Ghulam Hussain. Op. cit.
Stewart, Charles. Op. cit.

[3] Hunter, W. W. *A Statistical Account of Bengal*, Vol. XV, London, ... (1877), p. 225.

[4] Mishra, Madaneshwar. *Some Aspects of the Land Revenue History of Purnea District* (1971), p. 28.

Shaukat Jang acted wisely and helped Sirajuddoula to fight out his enemies, who ultimately deprived not only Aalivardi's house of the province of Bengal, but also the Indians of their country. Purnea, as also the whole of the country, was engulfed in the midnight darkness. The end of Muslim Rule which, during last 35 years bestowed immense opulence on Purnea, had begun. Though Mohanlal tried his best to regulate the administration and the finances of Purnea, he was soon called upon to do duty against the English at Plassey. Moreover, it was during Mohanlal's rule that we first notice a trend to drain out Purnea's wealth, which in later years assumed gigantic proportions and according to the first English Supervisor of Purnea, G. G. Ducarel, this economic drain was one of the major factors that impoverished Purnea. To borrow the expression from K. M. Panikkar, Purnea 'witnessed a breakdown in the civilization which has but few parallels in the history of the world.'[1] It is proposed to examine in the next chapter how this process of degeneration condemned Purnea to severest poverty and ignominy under the weak Muslim rulers until 1770, when the British took over the administration of the district and attempted to evolve a sort of a rural administration.

[1] Panikkar, K. M. *A Survey of Indian History*, Bombay (1947), p. 212.

CHAPTER VI

ERA OF DECAY

After Plassey started a period of political revolutions not only in the provincial capital of Bengal, but also in the far flung areas like Purnea. The district witnessed amazingly frequent changes in the administration during the post-Plassey period and the stability of the time of Saif Khan and Saiyad Ahmad Khan became a far cry. The Faujdars were appointed neither on account of their merits for the post nor they were removed because of their inability to run the administration—the guiding principle in this respect was the capacity of the Faujdar to play to the tune of the provincial governor, who in his turn was a mere puppet in the hands of the East India Company. The Subadars and Faujdars felt that their existence depended on their ability to collect as much revenue as they could.[1] Such large sums were required from the revenue farmers or Amils as they never paid before or could ever afford to pay. More and more revenue demand became the order of the day. A brief survey of the administration of different Faujdars during the period will show how Purnea was squeezed financially by them to fulfil the requirements of their mentors, the provincial governors, and consequently Purnea did not receive any care whatsoever. An era of decay of wealth and produce began in Purnea.

HAZIR ALI KHAN

Immediately after the death of Sirajuddoula (July 1757), a small revolution took place at Purnea. Hazir Ali Khan, who from a slave-boy to Saiyad Ahmad Khan rose to be the Superintendent of the Hall of Audience to Shaukat Jang, now availed himself of the influence which he had in the country and took possession of the town and government of Purnea. According

[1] Sinha, Narendra Krishna. *The Economic History of Bengal*, Vol. II, Calcutta, ... (1962), p. 33.

to Ghulam Hussain Khan, he in collusion with Achal Singh, who had been Dewan to Shaukat Jang, imprisoned the son of Mohanlal, seized his treasury and himself became Faujdar of Purnea.[1] At another place the same author writes that Hazir Ali Khan and Achal Singh imprisoned Mohanlal himself,[2] but this is in contradiction to his earlier statement, which is more likely to be correct, because, as already seen, Mohanlal had left for Murshidabad, where he was either cudgled to death, by the associates of Mir Jafar Khan[3] or poisoned by Durlabhram's men.[4] All the same, the said revolution took place at Purnea and there were two reasons that made it a success too—first, both Hazir Ali Khan and Achal Singh were popular with the people of Purnea. Achal Singh for long held the Parganas of Tajpur, Sripur, Gondwara and Karhagola and in that capacity he had earned reputation and effects. Both had cordial relations with the military Commanders and zamindars of Purnea from so early as the first year of Saiyad Ahmad Khan's administration. Second, truly observed by Ghulam Hussain Khan,

> 'The inhabitants of Purnea are exactly the counterpart of Bengal ; those tame, cowardly wretches, at all times so crouching and so ready to submit to anyone that offers. No one will wonder at Hazir Ali having brought into his views both the troops and the inhabitants.'[5]

Hazir Ali Khan then occupied the seat in Purnea and appointed Achal Singh as his Prime Minister and also conferred upon him the management of his finances. He, however, was

[1] Khan, Ghulam Hussain. *Sair-ul-Mutakharin*, Vol. II, Calcutta, ... (1902), p. 249.

[2] Ibid., p. 250.

[3] Ibid., p. 240.

[4] Ibid., footnote 127, p. 240.

[5] Khan, Ghulam Hussain. *Sair-ul-Mutakharin*, Vol. II, Calcutta,...(1902), p. 251.

no better than a pageant and acted entirely under the other's guidance.

KHADIM HUSSAIN KHAN

Mir Jafar Khan had succeeded Sirajuddoula as the Nawab of Bengal. On receiving the offending news of usurpation of the government of Purnea by Hazir Ali Khan, he set out to crush the usurper. He, however, was more inclined to march against Ram Narayan, the Governor of Bihar and wrest Patna from him. He, therefore, readily agreed when Khadim Hussain Khan represented that he wished 'to better his fortunes in the little corner of Purnea' by undertaking to quell, 'at his own charge and peril', the rebellion provided he was assisted with a small force for the purpose and subsequently appointed Faujdar of Purnea. Mir Jafar Khan agreed to Khadim Hussain Khan's proposal also because of his personal relations with him. The Nawab of Bengal also did not lose sight of the fact that Khadim Hussain Khan was in possession of much ready money. Accordingly, the investiture and Khillat of Purnea was bestowed upon him and Mir Kasim Khan was ordered to assist him with his corps.[1]

Khadim Hussain Khan had reasons to consider himself fit for undertaking the charge of the Faujdary of Purnea and when he made a request to the Nawab of Bengal to this effect, he was sure of obtaining the latter's concurrence. He was no stranger to Purnea as he had been in the service of Saiyad Ahmad Khan, being, indeed, sent by him to take possession of Purnea of his first appointment. He had lately distinguished himself by his brutal conduct towards the mother of Sirajuddoula, having her beaten off when she flung herself on the dead body of her son.[2] Furthermore, Khadim Hussain Khan was the son of Saiyad Khadim Ali Khan, the husband of Mir Jafar's

[1] Khan, Ghulam Hussain. *Sair-ul-Mutakharin*, Vol. II, Calcutta, .. (1902), pp. 249-254.
Salim, Ghulam Hussain. *Riyaz-us-Salatin*, Calcutta, ... (1902), p. 378.

[2] Khan, Ghulam Hussain. Op. cit., pp. 243-244.

sister. Though this relation was rather groundless as Khadim Hussain Khan was not born of the said lady, but of another wife of Saiyad Khadim Ali Khan, yet he assiduously boasted of being related to Mir Jafar Khan and never mentioned the latter but by the appellation of his *Mamu* or maternal uncle.[1] He, however, was very much related to him in other weightier respects. He was a boon companion of Mir Jafar and the two were nearly of the same age and were fond of pleasures and carousals. Both had an invincible inclination to some particular species of unnatural lusts ; mostly living and retiring together.[2]

Khadim Hussain Khan did not find much difficulty in establishing himself in Purnea. Soon after his appointment, he crossed the Ganges and wrote circular letters, which were simultaneously intimidating and containing promises calculated to gain hearts, to all men of consequence in Purnea. Hazir Ali Khan, on his part, resolved to repel the enemy and took up a strong position fortified by entrenchments. His minister Achal Singh was with him. He, however, raised his levies, mostly untrained men, no better than farmers and trusting in the predictions of an astrologer, named Ratanpat, made no attempt to move out of the entrenchment. What is amazing for a man of his rank is that he had no knowledge that his troops were unfit for a day of battle and indeed when it came to face two or three thousand horse and six or seven thousand foot under Khadim Hussain Khan, the former's troops began to desert their master without striking a blow. The irony of the situation is that men on both sides were seized with panic but while Khadim Hussain Khan was making attempts to secure assistance from Murshidabad, Hazir Ali Khan imitated his troops and escaped to Nepal. Achal Singh subsequently surrendered and received everything that had been bestowed upon him under the former Faujdar.[3]

[1] Ibid., p. 253.
Salim, Ghulam Hussain. Op. cit., footnote 1, p. 378.

[2] Ibid.
Khan, Ghulam Hussain. Op. cit., p. 253.

[3] ———, *Sair-ul-Mutakharin*, Vol. II, Calcutta, ... (1902), pp.254-256.

In December 1757, the new Faujdar made his entrance, unopposed, into Purnea and took up his abode in the palace built by Saiyad Ahmad Khan. One of his first measures was to have the nose of the astrologer Ratanpat cut off at a public place on account of the fact that Ratanpat claimed the possession of some villages that had been bestowed upon him successively by Saif Khan and Saiyad Ahmad Khan. The astrologer, moreover, had the audacity to think in terms of getting reward from the new Faujdar for having misled Hazir Ali Khan. The poor man, however, was punished much more than he deserved and remained mutilated all his life. This act was calculated to terrify all the grandees and principal men of Purnea who might ever think of claiming a share in the effects of the province.[1]

The new Nawab soon brought the entire district under his complete control and was sitting pretty easy, when in 1759 he became embroiled with Miran, son of Mir Jafar Khan, who resented his assumption of an independent position. Miran, resolving to expel and extinguish Khadim Hussain Khan, planned an expedition to Purnea.[2] He marched north with an English force under Clive to face the Shahzada (afterwards the Emperor Shah Alam), who being incited to crush the growing influence of the British East India Company was engaged in the invasion of Bihar. Miran called on Khadim Hussain Khan to meet him. The Purnea Faujdar responded favourably and led an army southwards to Karhagola, but to make himself secure against the suspected treachery on the part of Miran, he obtained a guarantee of safety from Caillaud. They then had an interview in the middle of the Ganges, each being in a separate boat, and were reconciled by the mediation of Caillaud.[3] The truce, however, was a hollow one, for Miran threatened to have Khadim Hussain Khan removed from his post, while the latter withheld all payment of revenue, marched

1 Ibid., p. 257.

2 Salim, Ghulam Hussain. *Riyaz-us-Salatin*, Calcutta,...(1902), p. 382.

3 Khan, Ghulam Hussain. *Sair-ul-Mutakharin*, Vol. II, Calcutta, ...(1902), p. 327.

across the Ganges with a force of 6,000 men, and threatened to throw in his lot with the Shahzada. This threat was effectual and he received a promise that he should remain Faujdar, on which he returned to Purnea.

In May, 1760, he openly revolted to permanently get rid of Miran, and his father sought to join himself with the Imperial Army.[1] Before leaving Purnea, he took care to raise his troops by extorting money from all he could get in his power, whether high or low. He confiscated the property and levied heavy contributions from the zamindars. It is recorded in the *Proceedings of the Comptrolling Council of Revenue*, Murshidabad (dated 26th August, 1771) that,

> 'Khadim Hussain Khan plundered every part of the province without mercy and left the merchants, zamindars and principal inhabitants in a state of bankruptcy and poverty from which they have never recovered.'[2]

To quote the words of Ghulam Hussain Khan,

> 'Such violences made his administration odious, and rendered his person an object of taunt and reproach; but he seemed to pay little attention to it, and indeed, he had not delicacy enough to feel the detestable part he had chosen to act; and, provided he made much money, he little minded the detestation of an incensed public.'[3]

Nevertheless, he succeeded in increasing his army to 6,000 cavalry, 10,000 infantry and 40 big and small guns. He built up a full treasury and a numerous artillery and as detailed above, an army, composed of selected men. This army could have helped the Imperial force to victory over Patna had it

1 Ibid., p. 349.

2 *Proceedings of the Comptrolling Council of Revenue*, Murshidabad, dated 26th August, 1771.

3 Khan, Ghulam Hussain. *Sair-ul-Mutakharin*, Vol. II, Calcutta, ... (1902), p. 256.

joined a little earlier.[1] The delay was caused because the Purnea Nawab first intended to go by river, and for that purpose collected a number of boats, but Major Caillaud, getting wind of his intention, seized them and had them burnt with the ammunition and stores on board.

Khadim Hussain Khan consequently marched along the northern shore of the Ganges in the hope of effecting a junction with the Emperor, who for his own reasons had by then retired by the highway towards Maner.[2] At Hajipur, however, Khadim Hussain Khan was attacked by Captain Knox, who marched across the river with a small force, consisting of 200 Europeans and a battalion of sepoys, which could not have exceeded 800 men, 5 field pieces and 300 of Sitab Roy's cavalry. The Purnea troops, on the other hand, having divided into several bodies, completely surrounded the little band of the Captain and commenced the attack. The battle lasted for six hours, column after column of cavalry charging down on the English detachment, which steadily received them with a discharge of grape shot or at the point of the bayonet. On one occasion Knox's troops were nearly overwhelmed and reports circulated that Khadim Hussain Khan had decidedly won, but a brilliant charge of grenadiers of Knox's own battalion repulsed the enemy and saved their friends. At length, tired of these fruitless attempts, which had been attended with considerable loss, Khadim Hussain Khan was compelled to retreat, leaving behind him 400 dead on the field, three elephants and eight pieces of cannon, which fell into the hands of the victors. Not contented with this success, Captain Knox continued to follow up the retreating enemy until evening closed in upon him, capturing a number of their ammunition waggons, which he blew up on the spot. The loss of the English on this occasion was remarkably small, for only 16 Europeans were killed, the number of sepoys is nowhere stated. Khadim Hussain Khan fled towards Bettiah and the English troops and

[1] Ibid., pp. 356-357.

[2] Salim, Ghulam Hussain. *Riyaz-us-Salatin*, Calcutta, ... (1902), p. 383.

the troops of Sitab Roy crossed the Ganges over to Patna.[1]

While Khadim Hussain Khan had started from Purnea along the northern shore of the Ganges to join the Imperial forces, the Murshidabad Court sent Miran along with Caillaud along the southern side of the Ganges to help Ram Narayan, the Governor of Patna to face the enemies. But in the meantime the Imperial forces had retired and the Purnea forces had been defeated. In the circumstances the forces under Miran and Caillaud crossed the Ganges and marched in pursuit of the retreating Nawab of Purnea. The latter reached the unfordable river Gandak where it was impossible for his numerous men to cross that river as the feat would require a large number of boats. To quote the words of Ghulam Hussain Salim,

> 'The army of Khadim Hussain Khan, like the Israelites of old, finding the river in front and the enemy in the rear, despaired of life.'[2]

The allied forces of Miran and Caillaud, however, succeeded in making Khadim Hussain Khan give battle on one occasion. The battle ended in a rout, the Purnea troops losing all their artillery and being compelled to abandon their treasures, heavy baggages and a large quantity of ammunition.[3] Finding all ways of escape cut off, Khadim Hussain Khan helplessly looked for some supernatural help. Such pitiable was his condition that he is reported to have passed one whole night upon his elephant as did most of his men upon their horses. Since the cup of the life of Khadim Hussain Khan and his companions was yet not full to the brim, one night Miran was killed by

[1] Broome, A. *History of the Rise and Progress of Bengal Army*, Vol. I, Calcutta, ... (1850), pp. 300-301.
Singh, Bahadur Shyam Narayan. *History of Tirhut*, (1922), p. 98.
Khan, Ghulam Hussain. *Sair-ul-Mutakharin*, Vol. II, Calcutta, ... (1902), pp. 358-362.

[2] Salim, Ghulam Hussain. *Riyaz-us-Salatin*, Calcutta, ... (1902), p. 383.
Singh, Bahadur Shyam Narayan. *History of Tirhut* (1922), p. 98.

[3] Ibid.
Salim, Ghulam Hussain. Op. cit.

lightning while sleeping in his tent near Bettiah, on the 19th of Zilkad in the year 1173 A.H. (i.e. 4th July, 1760 A.D.). Subsequently Caillaud also decided to retire and Khadim Hussain Khan, thus getting providentially rescued from the claws of certain death, marched away with the speed of lightning and wind, and effected his escape through the Tarai to the Subah of Oudh,[1] (July, 1760).[2]

SHER ALI KHAN

For three years after this, we hear nothing more of the Faujdars of Purnea. Hunter in his *A Statistical Account of Bengal*, mentions one Allah Kuli Khan[3] as the successor of Khadim Hussain Khan and it may be conjectured that it was he who ruled over Purnea during three years. For want of corroborative evidences, however, nothing definite can be said in this regard.

Immediately after Miran's death Nawab Mir Jafar Khan growing apprehensive of his ambitious son-in-law Mir Kasim Ali, thought it best to remove the latter from Murshidabad on sonre fair pretext. Accordingly Mir Kasim was invested with the Faujdary of Purnea in addition to his charge of the Faujdary of Rangpur. Mir Kasim was too ambitious to pass his days as a common Faujdar and it is a different story how he ignored Mir Jafar Khan's wishes and having recourse to diplomacy and intrigues, succeeded in superseding his father-in-law as Nawab of Bengal (1760-1763).

[1] Singh, Kalyan. *Khulasat-t-Tawarikh* (Translated by Nawab Sarfaraz Hussain Khan), *Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society*, Patna, June 1919, pp. 218-235.

Salim, Ghulam Hussain. *Riyaz-us-Salatin*, Calcutta, ... (1902), p. 385.

Khan, Ghulam Hussain. *Sair-ul-Mutakharin*, Vol. II, Calcutta, ... (1902), pp. 364-366.

Singh, Shyam Narayan. *History of Tirhut*, (1922), p. 98.

[2] The date of Miran's death is the basis for calculating this date.

[3] Khan, Ghulam Hussain. Op. cit., p. 375.

After becoming Nawab Mir Kasim Khan soon appointed his deputies to command the administration at all the principal centres of his province—Murshidabad, Dacca, Monghyr, Patna and Purnea. Incidentally all these deputies were weak and unreliable people.[1] The Faujdar of Purnea under him was Sher Ali Khan, who when the war with the English broke out in7 163, led all his available forces to join the Nawab at Udhua Mullah, leaving his brother as his Deputy in the district. The Deputy, with only a few soldiers, was rather concealed within the palace than able to govern the province.[2]

According to Broome's description, it was probably this Deputy or his brother Sher Ali Khan, who proved a good friend to the English sergeants, prisoners of Kasim Ali Khan, who were among the few that escaped the massacre of Patna. They (three of whose names are known, viz. Davis, Dougles and Speedy) had been sent to Purnea and placed under the charge of the Nawab of that district. Kasim Ali, having determined upon the destruction of his prisoners, sent orders to Purnea for them to be put to death. The Nawab, who happened to be a humane good man, and being highly pleased with the conduct of the sergeants while with him, declined putting the orders in execution. He, however, wrote to Kasim Ali, entreating that he would recall his mandate, because he feared, if he was still determined upon it, it would be a difficult matter (as the men were beloved by all his people) to find one that would undertake the task. Kasim Ali, on receipt of the letter, flew into a violent rage, and directed another order to be sent to the Nawab, in which the told him, if he had not spirit in himself to put his command in force against those ruthless and treacherous Englishmen, to send them immediately to Patna, where ample justice should be done for the crimes they had committed. On this letter being delivered to the Nawab, he sent for the sergeants, and with tears in his eyes informed them of

[1] Chatterjee, Nandlal. *Mir Qasim, Nawab of Bengal*, 1760-1763, Allahabad, (1935), p. 246.

[2] Khan, Ghulam Hussain. *Sair-ul-Mutakharin*, Vol. II, Calcutta, ... (1902), p. 515.

the severe orders he had received, and of the steps he had taken to preserve their lives, that he must now send them to Patna, where he hoped by the time they got there, the rage of Kasim Ali might be cooled, and that they might probably escape death. They were accordingly sent in a boat down the old Kosi with a guard of 13 men, but when the boat had reached the Ganges, they succeeded in overpowering the guard, and in making their way to Udhua Nullah, where they joined the British army under Major Adams.[1]

MIR ROHIUDDIN HUSSAIN KHAN

The state of affairs under Sher Ali Khan and his brother was taken advantage of by Rohiuddin Hussain Khan, a son of Saif Khan, who was in receipt of a small salary at the Nawab's Court at Monghyr.[2] He was also styled as Sipahdar Jang.[3] He was an ambitious young man, resolved to restore the lost fortune of his family as well as to come out of the state of humiliation which he had been thrown in since the days of Saiyad Ahmad Khan, his father-in-law. Suspecting that the fall of Nawab Mir Kasim was certain, he left Monghyr in an old leaky boat and made his way to Purnea. Arriving there at dead of night, he made himself known to Mehdi Begh, his father's old Maulvi who in order to save himself and his guest from the wrath of Mir Kasim Khan advised him to quit his house and Purnea immediately. Rohiuddin Hussain Khan then went down the Saura River to a place about ten miles away from Purnea town, where he kept himself and his boat concealed for five or six days, having no more with him than five or six people. He took the precaution to station some spies and messengers at Udhua, who were to inform him of what turn affairs would take before the same should become

[1] Broome, A. *History of the Rise and Progress of Bengal Army*, Vol. I, Calcutta, ... (1850), p. 392, Appendix, p. XIVI.

[2] Mir Kasim Ali Khan after becoming Nawab of Bengal shifted his capital to Monghyr.

[3] Hunter, W. W. *A Statistical Account of Bengal*, Vol. XV, London (1877), p. 225.

public. As soon as he heard of the defeat of Kasim Ali Khan at Udhua Nullah, he returned to Purnea. Having lived there for a considerable period in much influence and splendour during the reigns of his father and father-in-law, he was everywhere welcomed by the people as the real heir to the Masnad of Purnea. He was soon able to gather his adherents around. The most consequential minister of Sher Ali Khan's administration, Gurudayal Singh, who, as a clerk in Saif Khan's time, owed his fortune to the latter, as indeed Sher Ali Khan and his Deputy also did, was arrested. Before dawn Rohiuddin Hussain Khan put himself at the head of his men, and marched to the palace, where Sher Ali's Deputy was hiding with a few soldiers. The latter had no alternative but to surrender and quietly submit. Rohiuddin Hussain Khan, having received the submission of Sher Ali's Deputy, met with no opposition. The people of Purnea welcomed him with *nazars*, acknowledged him as their master and expressed their joy at his accession. Thus, a revolution was peacefully effected in Purnea.[1]

He next sent trusted persons to fetch the boats laden with treasure worth two lacs of rupees, which he had seized while hiding after being refused shelter in Mehdi Begh's house. These boats had put in close to the crazy vessel in which Rohiuddin Hussain Khan had come to Purnea and were bound for the provincial treasury at Monghyr. After that he appointed proper persons in every department and then sent letters to Major Adams and Mir Jafar Khan, acknowledging the latter as his master and congratulating both of them upon their successes. Mir Jafar Khan, sensible of the fact that the war with the English was far from being at an end, was pleased to see so much strength and revenue deducted from the enemy's scale, and he sent to the new Faujdar, a letter, in which he extolled his character for what he had done, and bestowed upon him the Government of Purnea. The new Faujdar, being strengthened by this accession of authority, established his government everywhere, treated both the people and gentry with the

[1] Khan, Ghulam Hussain. *Sair-ul-Mutakharin*, Vol. II, Calcutta, ... (1902), pp. 514-516.

utmost benignity, and, firmly keeping his seat on the stead of fortune and good luck, he continued to ride in the fields of command and success for a number of years together, nor did he lose his seat, when Mohammad Reza Khan came to be promoted to the office of Deputy Governor of Bengal.[1]

Rohiuddin Hussain Khan, like most of the princes of the day owed his fall to his thoughtlessness, indolence, prodigality, habitual intemperance and forgetfulness. Soon after his accession he developed capricious liking for an excessively intriguing and ill-natured young man called 'Asker-aaly', son of Shah Mustapha Kuli one of his father's officers and bestowed upon him the title of 'Khan' and invested him with full powers over his public and private concerns. The young man fully availed himself of the opportunity. He spent lavishly in the company of the dancers of both sexes, singers, fortune-tellers, farcers, and such other people. He gave promotions to his near and dear ones and undermined all those who kept at a distance from him. Over and above, he was continually oppressing both the farmers and the soldiers. As a result the revenues of the district were languishing and a variety of complaints were lodged by the officers of the Murshidabad Court against him. A favourite eunuch Hussain Kuli Khan succeeded in persuading the slothful lord of Purnea to dismiss Asghar Ali and appoint him in his stead. But Rohiuddin Hussain Khan was soon back into his element and restored Asghar Ali in his erstwhile office. Asghar Ali once again started behaving in the same old fashion. Thus, Rohiuddin Hussain Khan, like his brother Fakhruddin Hussain Khan, damaged not only the economy of Purnea, but also the prestige of his family which had so glamourously been established by Saif Khan not more than few years ago.[2]

Muhammad Reza Khan, after assuming the charge of the Deputy Governor of Bengal, took care to represent to the

[1] Khan, Ghulam Hussain. *Sair-ul-Mutakharin*, Vol. II, Calcutta, ... (1902), pp. 516-17.

[2] Khan, Ghulam Hussain. *Sair-ul-Mutakharin*, Vol. III, Calcutta, ... (1902)., pp. 30-32.

Council at Murshidabad the arrears and balances due by the revenue of Purnea and got Rohiuddin Hussain Khan dismissed from his office. A pension of rupees five thousand per month was bestowed upon him.[1]

RAJA SUCHET ROY

After obtaining Diwani rights over Bengal, Bihar and Orissa the East India Company deputed Raja Suchet Roy from Murshidabad as Faujdar of Purnea in 1765. This Raja Suchet Roy has been referred to as 'Merza Souchet Roy', in a letter of the Court of Directors, dated 11th November, 1763.[2] Suchet Roy was extremely unscruplous as an administrator of revenue in the capacity of Amil. He 'laid heavy assessments on the Ryots without regard to the *Putta* or Agreement'.[3] Suchet Roy had little regard for the welfare of husbandmen who were tremendously vexed by the heavy charges of collection. Suchet Roy instead of reducing these charges assessed the *raiyats* heavily. He could not collect the required amount from the *raiyats* and so he had to borrow large sums from the merchants which remained unpaid even in 1770. Suchet Roy had recourse to fines and other means of oppression for realisation of the increased amount, but the effect of these measures was detrimental to Purnea revenue.[4] In the enclosure to Becher's letter wrote to Harry Verelst, President of the Select Committee, the following account of Suchet Roy's administration appears,

> 'In the time of Ally Verdy Cawn the province of Purnea paid something less than four lacks of rupees a year, but since Company's accession to the Dewanee, when Souchit Ram was appointed Aumil in the space

[1] Ibid., pp. 31-32.

[2] Firminger, W. K. (Editor). *The Fifth Report*, Vol. I, Calcutta (1917), p. CLXIX.

[3] *Proceedings of the Comptrolling Council of Revenue*, Murshidabad, Vol. II dated 13th December, 1770.

[4] *The Letter Copy Book of the Resident at the Darbar at Murshidabad*, p. XXV.

of two years, he paid to Government twentyfive lakhs according to his agreement. Notwithstanding Souchit Ram retained no balance in his hands yet for the delivery of his accounts alone he never expected from the severe hands of Sezawulls till death released him.'[1]

Raziuddin Muhammad Khan

After about a year's administration in Purnea, Raja Suchet Roy was recalled and justifiably condemned to imprisonment. Justifiably, because, on the basis of meagre information that we have of his rule, we find that he did positive harm to the economy of Purnea through high ill-conceived revenue measures. Raziuddin Muhammad Khan was appointed to succeed him in the year 1174, i.e. 1767 A.D.[2]

Muhammad Ali Khan

The last of the Faujdars of Purnea was Muhammad Ali Khan. Francis Buchanan in his 'An Account of the District of Purnea', written in 1809-10 mentions one Muhammad Ali Khan, who was a nephew of Bani Beghum, widow of Ataullah Khan. The said Bani Begham had purchased Taluk Balalpur under Pargana Kakjol, Division Manihari in the time of Jafar Ali Khan and bestowed the same upon her nephews, Muhammad Ali Khan and Bakar Ali khan.[3] In the absence of corroborative evidences it is difficult to establish whether this Muhammad Ali Khan or someone else with this name rose to be the Faujdar of Hughly and Purnea.

Whatever, during a succession of weak and corrupt Faujdars in the past one decade Purnea had lost its former glamour and as administrators of revenue the authorities of the East India Company were anxious to commit Purnea to the

[1] *Proceedings of the Comptrolling Council of Revenue*, Murshidabad, dated 13th December, 1770.

[2] *The Letter Copy Book of the Resident at the Darbar at Murshidabad*, p. XXV.

[3] Buchanan, Francis. *An Account of the District of Purnea in 1809-1810*, Patna (1928), p. 469.

charge of a dependable person and Muhammad Ali Khan was their choice. It is worthwhile to quote from Becher's letter written on 30th June, 1769 to Harry Verelst in this connection,

> 'The province of Purnea being a very large and fine country, but at present in want of leniant measures to encourage the inhabitants, we thought it would be a great point gained if we could get a person appointed to manage the collections in that district whose integrity and moderation we might have reason to depend, which would give a confidence to the ryotts. With this view we proposed to the ministers sending Mahomed Ally Cawn, Phoujedar of Houghly, a man generally reckoned of an excellent character. The ministers acquiesced with our recommendation and we had the pleasure immediately to find the good effect that many of ryotts of Purnea who had come with complaints, on hearing of Mahomed Ally Cawn's appointment, returned well pleased home, saying, they did not doubt having justice'. [1]

He continued in his office till 1770 A.D., when he was replaced by G. G. Ducarel the first English Supervisor.

Revenue Assessments

Thus, Purnea during the years since Plassey witnessed the change in administration like the flickering quickness of a cinematograph film. The Faujdars during this period could not have the same hold over their territory as their predecessors had and the obvious result was that they could never ignore the pressing demand for money by the Nawabs of Bengal and passed on their burden over to the tenants without taking into consideration their capacity to pay. A brief survey of the revenue assessment of Purnea, made from time to time since 1757 will illustrate the point. According to Grant's estimates, the assessment of Purnea in 1757 was Rs 3,17,098 as 'Abwab'

[1] Firminger, W. K. *The Fifth Report*, Vol. I, Calcutta (1917), p. CLXXX.

or local levy and thus the total assessment was Rs 6,61,327.[1] In about 1760 thepressing demands of the English made Mir Kasim Ali look around for new sources of revenue. The wealthy province of Purnea was one of the first to be examined and reassessed. This gross assessment of Purnea came to Rs 21,09,415. This revealed that huge amounts were appropriated by the former Faujdars of Purnea. Grant says that Mir Kasim completed a regular Hustobud (or what is and what was) and found that Rs 14,72,845 was the concealed amount.[2] Apart from this, revenues received from market places, taxes, duties and licenses, etc., which included 'Sair duties' were not transmitted to the provincial treasury. In Purnea district, the gunj or Nawabganj on the confluence of the Mahananda and the Ganges alone yielded a duty of Rs 1,18,793.[3] In 1764, Nandkumar reduced the net revenue of Purnea as ascertained by Mir Kasim at Rs 19,45,405 to Rs 17,88,174 by reintroducing the allowed Mufassil charges, i.e. cost of collection, etc., and the revenue was fixed at less than what it ought to have been. In 1765, at the time of the acquisition of the Diwani by the British, Rs 17,88,173 was accepted as the gross revenue assessment of Purnea, Rs 3,65,637 was the cost of collection and the net assessment was Rs 14,22,536.[4] In the time of Raziuddin Muhammad Khan (1767), Purnea used to transmit every year Rs 11,00,000 to the Murshidabad treasury.[5] Thus, Purnea revenues gradually decreased since 1757. Raymond, the translator of *Sair-ul-Mutakharin* expresses his wonder at the fall of revenue since the days of Saiyad Ahmad Khan whose revenue amounted to fiftyeight lacs. To quote Raymond's words,

> 'Fifty-eight-lacs : Here is then a decay incredible, as being past all computation and all conjecture ; for although some fifteen years Raziuddin Muhammad Khan used to transmit yearly from thence eleven lacs to the treasury of Murshidabad, it is certain that Purniah cannot yield now (1786) above six or seven lacs a year'.[1]

[1] Ibid., Vol. II, p. 7

[2] Firminger, W. K. *The Fifth Report*, Vol. II, Calcutta (1917), p. 337.

[3] Ibid., p. 236.

[4] Ibid., pp. 339-340.

[5] Khan, Ghulam Hussain. *Sair-ul-Mutakharin*, Vol. II, Calcutta, ... (1902), footnotes 34, p. 137.

The Weak and the Oppressive Faujdars

The most characteristic feature of the unquiet times of the post-Plassey period in Purnea, as everywhere in Bengal, was that people were made to suffer at the hands of the Faujdars themselves. While the Faujdars from Saif Khan to Shaukat Jang paid something much less than the demand in respect of revenue. As a matter of fact Purnea in the time of Alivardi Khan paid something less than four lacks of rupees a year. Furthermore, those Nawabs behaved more or less like autonomous rulers. They seldom received dictations from Murshidabad. A change in the above policy was visible from the time of Shaukat Jang. The Faujdars since Shaukat Jang were all made to play to the tune of the Subadars. Besides, their tenure of office used to be so short that it was impossible for them to devote their attention to the welfare of the people. Some of these Faujdars had a competition with the Subadars which more than often dragged them into uncalled for wars. All this told heavily upon the material conditions of the people of Purnea. After Shaukat Jang's defeat Sirajuddoula's nominee Mohanlal very ably regulated the finances of Purnea, but he did not miss the opportunity to collect as much valuables as possible and carried them to Murshidabad. In May, 1760, Khadim Hussain Khan, the Faujdar of Purnea, revolted against the Nawab of Bengal and made preparations to join the Imperial force under Shah Alam who had invaded Bihar. In order to raise troops, he plundered every part of Purnea and left the principal inhabitants in a state of complete bankruptcy. Similarly, Rohiuddin Hussain Khan pursued an extremely oppressive policy and both the farmers and the soldiers under him were squeezed to the maximum materially. As a result the

[1] Ibid.

revenues of the district were languishing. The unscruplous Faujdar Raja Suchet Roy paid Rs 25,00,000 to the provincial treasury in about two years after 1765.[1] While revenue remittance out of Purnea had a tendency to go up the tenants and cultivators of Purnea in Suchet Roy's time were subjected to heavy charges of collection. As a general principle the Amils were intent upon extracting as much as they could in as short a period as possible. When Mir Kasim Ali was the Subadar of Bengal, the latter intended to collect over Rs 21,00,000 from Purnea alone. It is, however, not known how much he could collect.[2]

The Existence of the Class of Zamindars

Another characteristic feature of the period was the growth in the powers of the zamindars. It may be mentioned here that right from the beginning there were hereditary zamindars as well as lessees in the district of Purnea. The ex-proprietor of the Khagra estate in Purnea, is a descendant of the zamindar of Surjapur Pargana and this estate has been their property from 1545 by the grant of a *sanad*.[3] Pargana Kumaripur was the property of Raja Ramchandra Roy which was given to him by Saif Khan.[4] The estates of Asja and Teerakhardah were the property of the Banaili family from 1751 and before that these belonged to Purnea Raja Ramchandra Roy.[5] During the last days of Mughal rule, there were some 15 zamindars in Purnea.[6] The *Fifth Report* mentions that in Purnea there were as many zamindars as

[1] Sinha, Narendra Krishna. *The Economic History of Bengal from Plassey to the Permanent Settlement*, Vol. II, Calcutta (1962), p. 35.

[2] Ibid.
Firminger, W. K. (Editor). *The Fifth Report*, Vol. I, Calcutta (1917), pp. 409-15.

[3] O'Malley, L. S. S. *Bengal District Gazetteer—Purnea*, Calcutta (1911), p. 194.

[4] Buchanan, Francis. *An Account of the District of Purnea in 1809-1810*. Patna (1928), p. 479.

[5] Ibid., p. 493.

[6] Sinha, Narendra Krishna. *The Economic History of Bengal...*, Vol. II, Calcutta (1962), p. 17.

there were Parganas to be found in its jurisdiction.[1] Not only that a class of zamindars existed in Purnea from quite an early a time but during the heyday of the Purnea Faujdars they were advantageously utilised to promote the welfare of the people. Whenever a zamindar became oppressive or showed signs of disaffection, the Faujdar was quick to take steps to bring such zamindars under effective control. One Durjay Narayan, proprietor of Kumaripur estate, had been dispossessed of his property by Saif Khan on account of the fact that the former picked up a quarrel with the Dewan of the Nawab.[2] Saiyad Ahmad Khan punished Md. Jalil, a zamindar of Purnea for his rebellious attitude and confiscated his zamindari. In 1756 the Khagra family got back its zamindari on the condition that it would look after the welfare of the people. In the time of Saiyad Ahmad Khan we have the evidence of farms being leased out to influential persons over and above the zamindars. Achal Singh was a lessee of Tajpur and other Parganas. The following account in *Sair-ul-Mutakharin* refers to the fact that Purnea used to be leased out to influential persons like Achal Singh,

> 'his credit in the province knew no bounds, having been for a length of time strictly connected with Government as lessee of the District of Tadjpoor, Seripoor, Gundwara and Karangola in which station he had acquired both riches and character. The farmers of revenue, as well as all the military commanders, had connections with him so early as the first year of Saiyad Ahmad Khan's administration'.[3]

Thus, a class of zamindars existed in Purnea but they were a source of strength to the district under the strict surveillance of the great Faujdars in the pre-Plassey period. The Faujdars, as a representative of the Nazim, never allowed the zamindars

[1] Firminger, W. K. *The Fifth Report*, Vol. II, Calcutta, ... (1917), p. 335.

[2] Buchanan, Francis. Op. cit.

[3] Khan Ghulam Hussain. *Sair-ul-Mutakharin*, Vol. II, Calcutta, ... (1902), pp. 250-251.

to act outside their jurisdiction and the tenantry could look up to him for justice and protection. With the decline of the provincial authority and the subsequent weakening of the office of the Faujdars, the powers of the zamindars grew. They undertook to perform certain police, judicial and executive functions which of right did not belong to them. Saiyad Ghulam Hussain Khan, while discussing the causes of diminution of revenue and population all over Bengal, mentions the exorbitant powers of zamindars to be one of them. He says,

> 'It is deemed an undeniable truth amongst the men of sense of this land, and it was a standing rule amongst the princes of these kingdoms, that no trust is to be reposed in the words of a zamindar, not even in his most solemn promises and treaties, as they are, to a man, a refractory, short sighted, faithless set of people, that mind nothing but present interest, and requires always a strict hand.'[1]

This strict hand, however, was no more there and consequently the zamindars assumed such duties which of right did not belong to them and the result was that the plight of the peasantry became miserable.

The Causes of Decay

The causes of decay of the wealth and produce of Purnea were enquired into great details by G. G. Ducarel, the first Supervisor of Purnea in 1770. According to him the first cause was that the *raiyats* and others who had been drawn to Purnea by the mild government of Saif Khan and Saiyad Ahmad Khan, 'quitted the country again in numbers when they no longer found that benefit and the land they occupied went to waste.' The real cause of decay of cultivation and consequently of

[1] Khan, Ghulam Hussain. *Sair-al-Mutakherin*, Vol. III, Calcutta, ...(1902), p. 204.

revenue, therefore, was the shortage of population or in the words of Ducarel 'want of sufficient number of hands'. During the weak and vigourless administration of the Faujdars in the post-Plassey period the grandeur and attraction of the court of the former Faujdars could not be sustained and the security of life and property of the people fell a prey to the oppression and tyranny of the Faujdars themselves. Incentive to agriculture, whatsoever, was completely absent and under such circumstances, desertion by *raiyats* was nothing surprising.

The second cause to which Ducarel refers to is the oppression by various revenue collecting agencies. Taking advantage of the situation created as a result of the weakening of the authority of the Faujdar, the revenue collectors resorted to oppressive methods and to satisfy their own interests realised from the tenants various cellection charges and other imposts which were arbitrary, vexations and burdensome. Heavy charges of collection leading to high revenue assessments, which Ducarel terms as 'destructive rates of rent', greately harassed the *raiyats*. The zamindars, talukdars or other revenue collectors at the village and pargana levels realised Nazranas and Salamis (or presents), Ijardaree (or revenue farmer's fee) and interests for money borrowed by the revenue farmers to pay their instalments of revenue and so on. Several other charges, viz. the charity charges, meant to be distributed among different families who claimed it by virlue of Sanads or patent, the Nazranas for the Faujdar and his subordinates, a commission of 9 annas every hundred rupees received at the treasury meant to be distributed among the clerks of the treasury, the Nankar or subsistence allowance to be paid to the zamindars and the Kanungoes, the Sepoy charges to pay for the country troops, the additional cess called *bhoni* and *gunda* and the imposts like Rose Piyada or daily allowance to the peon and *khoraki* or victuals, etc., were realised from the *raiyats* at the Pargana level. The Abwab Faujdary was an additional impost which consisted of fines realised by the revenue farmer as a court of justice. These charges amounted to Rs 12 or 14 lacks out of which Rs 2½ lacks were attributed to Sepoy charge above. These charges were simply harassing to the

cultivators.[1] Not only this, on account of the exortion and injustice practised by the revenue collecting agencies, the cultivators practised concealment and evasion by which the Government was deprived of its just demands.[2] Thus corruption at all levels was bound to affect the peasantry.

A constant drain of money out of Purnea without proportionate returns was the third factor which impoverished the district. Ducarel in course of his evidence in person before the Board in July, 1775, said that the Company spent the revenues of the provinces mostly on the maintenance of the troops and on an investment for Europe. Since there were no troops stationed near about Purnea and there was also no manufacture of importance in Purnea,[3] the district should not have been made to suffer by draining out its resources on these accounts. Now no longer the property of Purnea just changed hands within the district or to put it in the words of Ducarel 'what was collected here was spent here'[4], but a major portion of it flowed out of the district.

The process of decay in the district fittingly culminated in the colossus famine of 1769-70, which according to Ducarel was responsible for wrecking the backbone of Purnea. The effects of the famine will be examined in the next chapter. The famine was the major catastrophe which Ducarel was called upon to face immediately after he took over as the first English Supervisor of the district.

To summarise, during the years following the Battle of Plassey (or, the Battle of Baldiabari in the context of our history, i.e. history of Purnea) political as well as economic degeneration stalked through not only Purnea but the whole of Bengal. The land and people were subjected to weak and

[1] *Proceedings of the Comptrolling Council of Revenue*, Murshidabad, Vol. II, dated 13th December, 1770 (Purnea Letter No. 118).

[2] Firminger, W. K. *The Fifth Report*, Vol. I, Calcutta, ... (1917), p. 393.

[3] Ramsbotham, R. B. *Studies in the Land Revenue History of Bengal*, 1769-1789, London (1926), pp. 69-70.

[4] *Proceedings of the Comptrolling Council of Revenue*. Op. cit.

corrupt administrative organisation. As has already been shown, the conditions regarding revenue assessments and collections had become unsettled by the time of the Grant of Diwani to the East India Company in 1765. The Faujdar was at the helm of affairs in the district not only in political matters but also in matters relating to land revenue administration. Much, therefore, depended on his personal capacity and influence as is evident from the fact that the Faujdars before 1757 spent a major part of the collected revenue in the district itself, while their successors more than once plundered the people of Purnea to satisfy the demands of the provincial rulers. The latter became so weak and depended for their strength so much upon the outsiders like the Nawabs of Bengal that the zamindars under them assumed great powers and did all to enrich themselves at the cost of the peasantry. It is on this account that while Saiyad Ahmad Khan undertook an expedition against the rebellious zamindar of Khagra to ensure peace and security of his people, the later zamindars themselves became a source of disturbance and exploitation to their people. It was also on this account that the provincial government or its representatives could not audit the finances operated by various agencies below the rank of the Faujdar in earlier times and as shown earlier the great Faujdars of Purnea did not render any account of their revenues. Hence the provincial government had access only to that part of the revenue of Purnea, which its Faujdar of his own accord allowed him to have. In the post-Plassey period, however, the situation considerably changed. The increasing demand of the East India Company and pressure on account of wars led Nawab Mir Kasim to investigate in 1761 the collections made by the zamindars. As 'the financial operations of the State in discovering the genuine collections made throughout the country, descended no further than the Faujdar',[1] in former times, the district was rich and prosperous so much that the princes of ruling family considered it a great fortune to be in the possession of the Faujdary of Purnea. But after 1757 the

[1] Firminger, W. K. *The Fifth Report*, Vol. II, Calcutta,...(1917), p. 339.

prosperity of Purnea dwindled and we have evidence that it came to be utilised as a ground where the Subadars of Bengal wanted to dump their rivals. Mir Kasim's is a case in hand. Considering this man as a potential rival for the Masnad of Bengal, his father-in-law proposed to send him away to Purnea. In short, what K. K. Datta has to say of Bengal was also true of Purnea,

> 'the political turmoils of the period in Bengal were eating into her economic vitality'.[1]

[1] Datta, K. K. *Alivardi and His Times*, Calcutta, ... (1963), p. 209.

CHAPTER VII

AGE OF ADMINISTRATIVE RECONSTRUCTION

The period between 1770 to 1793 witnessed the establishment of British rule in Purnea. As has already been shown in the preceding chapter, the last days of Mohammadan rule in Purnea were notoriously harmful to the economy of the district. Close on the heels of the Mohammadan misrule, Purnea was visited by a calamitous famine in 1770 which brought in its wake epidemics and the life of the people in the district was rendered miserable beyond description. To make things worse, there was constant trouble along the northern frontier. Thus, early years of British rule were years of trouble for Purnea. Commercial interests being primary and most important consideration in all adventures of the British in Bengal and elsewhere, it was but natural that they should be anxious to evolve a system that could enhance the capacity of the land to produce more and more revenue. In order to meet the situation arising out of the recurring natural calamities and frontier troubles as well as to promote their own commercial interests, the British, soon after assuming the revenue administration of Bengal in 1765, directed all their energy in acquiring a detailed knowledge of the land and people, which the destiny had put under their charge, and investigating into the causes of 'decay of wealth' and also finding out ways and means to set things right. It is proposed to examine in this chapter how the British hewed their way through the tangled situation and with what amount of success.

THE COMING IN OF THE BRITISH

Through a perpetual grant of the Diwani by a *Farman* or patent from Mughal Emperor Shah Alam, the East India Company received the power to collect revenues in the three provinces of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa as early as the 12th

August 1765, but actually the British did not assume the responsibility for the same until a plan of supervision was adopted in 1769.[1] Since the land was practically the only source of subsistence for the people and the most important source of State's revenue, the British after becoming collectors of revenue, could afford to ignore the land management at their own cost. Land revenue administration of a right kind, therefore, became the well understood primary and fundamental responsibility of the Government.[2]

The land revenue systems evolved under the East India Company were superstructures built on the existing systems, their roots lay in the Mughal system of which Shershah and Akbar were the principal architects. Protection of the rights of *raiyats* along with ensured collection of State demand of revenue was the foremost consideration of Mughal sovereigns while dealing with land revenue administration.[3] During the time of the later Mughals, however, the system degenerated and lost its vigour as has already been shown in the last chapter, the persons in authority were interested only in squeezing out maximum money from the *raiyats*. This process of degeneration acquired greater pace after the Battle of Plassey. During the period of conquests and consolidation of British power, the main object before the Company was the realization of the largest possible revenue for waging wars. This introduced the main evils in the land system in India. What further worsened the situation was the fact that on the one hand the British were interested in the realization of the largest possible revenue and on the other hand the servants of the Company were not in a position to undertake the administration of the whole of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa.[4] Under the circumstances, the collection of

[1] Mishra, B. B. *The Central Administration of the East India Company, 1773 to 1834*. London, Oxford University Press (1959), p. 110.

[2] Gupta Hiralal. *Journal of Indian History*, Vol. XLII, Part I, April 1964, Serial No. 124, Trivandrum, University of Kerala, p. 169.

[3] Moreland, W. H. *The Agrarian System of Moslem India*, Cambridge, (1929), pp. 15-16.

[4] Field, C. D. *Land holding and the relation of landlord and tenant in various countries*, Calcutta (1885), pp. 457-58.

revenue and the administration of civil justice were left in the hands of Reza Khan and Shitab Rai, the Naib Diwans (or Deputy Ministers for Revenue and Civil Justice) as well as Naib Nazims (or Deputy Ministers for Police and Criminal Justice) respectively for Bengal and Bihar. According to W. W. Hunter,

> 'This divorce of the responsible control vested in the Company, from the actual conduct of the administration by the old native officials in the Districts, proved disastrous alike to the rulers and the people.'[1]

The native officers and farmers of revenue frequently committed acts of rapacity and oppression without any fear of punishment by Government, because the latter seldom interposed its authority so long as its revenue demands were satisfied. The Court of Directors expressed their dissatisfaction with the work of revenue collection by indigenous agency[2] and remarked that the revenues of Burdwan, Midnapore and Chittagong had been considerably augmented being under the immediate supervision of the covenanted servants of the Company.[3] The Directors realised the necessity of assuming the direct administration of revenue and announced their intention,

> 'To stand forth as Diwan, and by the agency of the Company's servants to take upon themselves the entire care and management of the revenues and authorised the President and Council to introduce a system of reforms accordingly'.[4]

They further pointed out that their intention was to proceed in this work without taking off from any of those profits and emoluments which have accrued to the zamindars who have

[1] Hunter, W. W. *Bengal Ms. Records*, Vol. I, London (1894), p. 17.

[2] Firminger, W. K. (Editor). *Fifth Report*, Vol. I, Calcutta,...(1917), (Introduction) p. CLXVIII.

[3] Sinha, N. K. (Editor). *Fort William-India House Correspondence*, Vol. V, 1767-1769, Delhi, (1949), pp. 211-12.

[4] Firminger, W. K. Op. cit., p. 5.

lands from their ancestors, much less to add anything to the Rents to be collected from the Tenants, on the contrary, they meant 'to better the condition both of the one and the other, by relieving them from many oppressions which they now labour under'.[1] Thus, while assuming the direct administration of revenue, the Company realised the necessity of adopting the line of least resistance as recognised by the Directors. In 1769, the Supreme Council in Calcutta delegated its authority in revenue matters to a Select Committee drawn from its own members which acting in deference to the wishes of the Directors decided by a resolution on 16th August, 1769,

> 'That in every province or district a gentleman in the service be appointed, with or without assistance, in proportion to the extent of the district, whose office or department is to be subordinate to the resident at the Darbar'.[2]

The Select Committee accordingly appointed a number of Supervisors to the several districts of the Diwani province. The Supervisors were furnished with detailed instruction for obtaining information concerning their respective jurisdictions. The instructions to the Supervisors were as follows :

> 'They were directed to acquire information as to the revenue history of the province, going back for the purpose to a given era when good order and government had been universal, they were to enquire into the real limits of "estates" held by the zamindars, the quantity of land they ought to have revenue free, and the real "rents" or payments which the actual cultivators of the soil ought to make in each estate. Various other improvements were hoped for; and specially illeagl revenue-free holdings were to be properly

[1] Sinha, N. K. (Editor). *Fort William-India House Correspondence*, Vol. V, 1767-1769, Delhi (1949), p. 212.

[2] Mishra, B. B. *The Central Administration of the East India Company, 1773 to 1834*, London, ... (1959), p. 110.

> assessed and made to pay. The cultivators were to be protected from the exactions of the zamindars, land leases or "pottahs", specifying exactly what each man had to pay, were to be granted.'[1]

Accordingly Mr. G. G. Ducarel was appointed the first English Supervisor of Purnea in 1770 and with this the control over Purnea in all respects passed from Mohammadan to British hands.

APPOINTMENT OF G. G. DUCAREL, FIRST SUPERVISOR

George Gustavas Ducarel was not only the first English Supervisor of Purnea, but also the first among the Supervisors whose appointment formed the precedent for the istitution of supervisors in other districts of the Diwani portion. Purnea being important district attracted special attention of the British rulers. It may be quoted from a letter of Harry Verelst, the Governor of Bengal, dated June 30, 1769 (which appeared on the consultations of the Secret Committee of 8th July, 1770) to show how the British rulers valued Purnea and took care to appoint a thorougbly reliable Supervisor in addition to Muhammad Ali Khan, who had already been appointed Faujdar of Purnea :

> 'This district being considerable and one that will, we are persuaded, under proper management admit of a large increase in a few years, we have thought proper, notwithstanding confidence in Mahomed Ally Cawn, to appoint Mr. Ducarel to go to Purnea, and to assist in such a plan for conducting the collection in that district as will best tend to the improvement of the country, the care of the *ryots*, and the benefit of our employers, we have great hopes from the experience that gentleman attained in the province last year, and from the opinion we entertain of his abilities, that he will be of great service in forming a proper plan

[1] Baden-Powell, B. H. *The Land System of British India*, Vol. I, Oxford (1892), p. 392.

and procuring the necessary accounts to ascertain a real value of the province.'[1]

Richard Becher, member of the Select Committee, welcomed the appointment and wrote,

> 'Mr. Ducarel, having been thrice in Purnea, is known and respected there, and would, no doubt, support the farmers in their just rights.'[2]

Apart from ability and experience Ducarel meritted appointment because of his great knowledge of Persian also. It may be noted here that the knowledge of Persian for an officer was considered necessary in those days of early British rule. We find a reference to this quality of Ducarel in the letter quoted above. On the question of sending one Anderson to assist Ducarel, Becher had the following to say,

> 'Mr. Anderson I would wish to remain at the Durbar, as from his knowledge of the Persian language, he could be a very useful Assistant here. Mr. Ducarel is himself so well versed in the language, as to have no occasion for the Assistants in that way.'[3]

One Jacomb, instead of Anderson, was appointed to accompany Ducarel subsequently.

Ducarel, as also Muhammad Ali Khan, the Deputy Governor, proceeded to Purnea where they found the state of the country was even worse than was represented.[4] The district was let out in farm in 1769 for three years.[5] In the 1770, Ducarel found the major portion of the district uncultivated. He knew

[1] Firminger, W. K. *The Fifth Report*, Vol. I (Introduction), Calcutta,... (1917) p. CLXXX.

[2] Ibid., p. CXCIV.

[3] Ibid., p. CXCIV.

[4] Firminger, W. K. (Editor). *The Letter Copy Book of the Resident at the Durbar at Murshidabad*, 1769-1770, Calcutta, ... (1919), p. XXV.

[5] Ibid, p. XXIII.

that Purnea could produce revenue of eighteen lakhs of rupees in the regime of Saif Khan. He, therefore, in right earnest began his work of procuring the necessary accounts regarding the district, as desired by the Directors. His investigations form a landmark in the history of Purnea. Thanks to these investigations we possess an extensive information respecting the years between 1770-1772. Furthermore, these helped not only in constructing the past history of Purnea but also in many ways shaped the future history of Purnea. We have already referred the results of Ducarel's investigation with regard to the causes of decay of wealth and produce in Purnea since the affluent days of Saif Khan and Saiyad Ahmad Khan. It was mentioned in that connection that the famine of 1769-1970 was a major factor.

Famine of 1770 and Other Calamities

The ravages of the said famine 'continued almost a twelve month in a degree of severity hardly to be paralleled in the History of any Age or country'.[1] The famine, as reported by Reza Khan, came in the wake of the total failure of rains in the previous season as a result of which the tanks and springs all dried up and the small stores of grain at Diwanganj were consumed by fire. Not a drop of rain fell till May. This was followed by inundations resulting in entire loss of harvests.[2] 'The mortality, the beggary' exceeded all description. Above one-third of the inhabitants perished in the once plentiful province of Purnea.[3] The severity of the famine was felt in the villages and the towns alike. There were certain Parganas in which people either perished or deserted. The Pargana of Haveli Purnea, which contained about a thousand villages and several others became depopulated.[4] The flourishing grain-

[1] *Proceedings of the Comptrolling Council of Revenue*, Murshidabad, Vol. VIII, dated 30th December, 1771, (S.L.S. No. 523).

[2] Ibid., Vol. II, dated 13th December, 1770,. (Purnea Letter No. 118)

[3] Hunter, W. W. *The Annals of the Rural Bengal*, Calcutta,...(1965), pp. 20-21.

[4] *Proceedings of the Comptrolling Council of Revenue*, Murshidabad, Vol. II, adted 13th December, 1770, (Purnea Letter No. 118).

market of Alamganj went to decay and a major part of the Purnea town turned into jungle and became a refuge for wild beasts.[1] The number of the weavers, who worked in the who Company's factory at Maldah on the boarder of Purnea and as *raiyats* of Purnea earned profit from land along with their employment in the factory, was reduced to half. The condition of the poorer section of the *raiyats*, who 'solely depended on tilling the lands for their daily bread', could easily be imagined.[2] Mohammad Ali Khan, Faujdar of Purnea reported to the higher authorities thus, 'all through the stifling summer of 1770 the people went on dying. The husbandmen sold their cattle; they sold their implements of agriculture; they devoured their seed-grain, they sold their sons and daughters, till at length no longer children could be found'.[3] In June, 1770 the Resident at the Durbar affirmed that the livingwere feeding onthe dead.[4] Sir John Shore's poetry, the only available non-official description of the famine which adheres as closely to the facts as many men's prose, has often been quoted, and will bear repetition :

'Still fresh in memory's eye the scene I view,
The shrivelled limbs, sunk eyes, and lifeless hue ;
Still hear the mother's shrieks and infant's moans,
Cries of despair and agonizing moans,
In wild confusion dead and dying life ;—
Hark to the jackal's yell and vulture's coy,
The dog's fell howl, as midst the glare of day
They riot unmolested on their pray
Dire scenes of horror, which no pen can trace,
Nor rolling year's from memory's page efface'.[5]

[1] Ibid., (S.L.R. No. 118.)

[2] *Proceedings of the Comptrolling Council of Revenue*, Murshidabad, Vol. VIII, dated 30th December, 1771, (S.L.S. No. 523).

[3] Hunter, W. W. Op. cit., pp. 21-21.

[4] Ibid., p. 22.

[5] Hunter, W. W. *The Annals of Rural Bengal*, Calcutta,...(1965), pp. 22-23.

The famine of 1770 was not an isolated phenomenon. It was followed in rapid succession by a number of various other calamities. Though describing them here will not be in keeping with the chronological order, that has hitherto been maintained in this work, yet for getting a clear view of the problems that raged the British during a quarter of a century of their rule in Purnea, a change in the scheme is called for. The last quarter of the eighteenth century witnessed many more periods of scarcity. The uncommon drought in 1783 occasioned almost a total failure of the rice crops and consequently a steep rise in its price. The export of rice from Purnea had to be banned on this account. Rajmahal, Bhagalpur and Monghyr which drew their supplies immediately from Purnea, were left to make their own arrangements. Deficient rainfall was again recorded in 1788 and in 1791, the rains set in a month earlier than usual and failed prematurely. Resultant loss of crop, however, was estimated at not more than one-fourth of the usual annual produce.[1] The agricultural produce was affected not only on account of calamitous conditions, but also due to an excessive harvest in a particular period. In 1771, for example, there was a magnificant crop and as a result, the prices came down. The best wheat and rice were sold at the rate of $3\frac{1}{2}$ to 4 maunds per rupee. The irony was that even at such low rates, there were no purchasers. The cheapness of grains, of all the causes, prompted the neglect of agriculture and consequently there was decay.[2] In 1791 an epidemical distemper prevailed fatally upon Purnea. The then Collector, S. Heatly wrote to William Comper, President and Member of the Board of Revenue that,

'The inhabitants have been very generally affected by the disorder, in so much that there is scarcely one person of the whole amla of my Cutchery, able to attend to his

[1] *Proceedings of the Committee of Revenue*, dated 17th October, 1783 (L. R. Purnea-19).

[2] Sinha, N. K. *The Economic History of Bengal*, Vol. II, Calcutta,...(1962), P. 61.

duty ; and from the representations of the zamindars, it appears, that the same distress is experienced in the mofassil Cutcheries. I am sorry to add that the mortality has been considerable ; and that the violence of the epidemic seems rather to increase than abate.'[1]

The famine and concurrence of calamities, followed fast on one another, occasioned great mortality and desertion.

Trouble Along the Northern Frontier

A constant trouble along the northern frontier further enhanced the problems of the British officials. In October, 1788, one of the Nepali Sardars of Palmary, named Dayaram, who had several villages belonging to Purnea, raided the village of Churli, carrying off one of its inhabitants. The remonstrances of the British succeeded in securing his release, but he had been so brutally handled, his wounds mortifying and being full of maggots, that he died a few days later. A British officer John Pagan reported to the Collector of Purnea,

> 'This affair has caused a general alarm along the Frontier, and I am very certain if it is overlooked, the consequence will be a total desertion of that part of country, for no man will choose to hold his life and property at the mercy of a set of inhuman barbarians, which without the protection of Government must be the case in future.'[2]

In less than a fortnight the Collector reported to the Board of Revenue another outrage committed by the Nepalese. He wrote,

> 'The conquese of Morung by Goorca in defiance of Mr. Hasting's order to them not to cross the Cossy, the assassination of the young Rajah of Morung who had taken protection in Purnea, and their repeated

[1] Byrne, J. *Final Report on the Survey and Settlement Operation in the District of Purnea*, 1901-1908, Calcutta,...(1908), Appendix V, p. XL.

[2] Ibid.

> ravages on our frontier, by which the revenue has at times suffered considerably, having been overlooked or not resented, have given them such an opinion of the moderation and forbearance of our Government, that nothing but a decisive step will be sufficient to restrain them within proper bounds'.[1]

Again in 1793 we find that a band of fakirs, said to be, 'of the same description as the *fakirs* who for sometime have been in the habit of plundering in the eastern provinces', came in from Nepal, raided several villages on the boundary and made an unsuccessful attempt on one of the frontier posts.[2]

The Financial Reforms of 1770-72

Such were the troubles that the British were called upon to face in Purnea. In view of the challenges thrown by these troubles and calamities as well as to secure their own commercial interests the British right from the outset of their rule started making efforts for evolving a system of rural administration for Purnea. We have already seen that G. G. Ducarel, the first Supervisor of Purnea, investigated into the history and circumstances of the land and people of Purnea and found the affairs there utterly mismanaged. He, therefore, introduced a series of reforms calculated to preserve and ultimately improve the revenue of the district for the ease and happiness of the people.

First of all Ducarel sought to extend protection to the *raiyats* by reducing heavy collection charges and stopping arbitrary fines and other acts of oppression on the part of the revenue collectors, in order to encourage the famine-stricken *raiyats* to apply to cultivation and increase their capacity to pay higher rents.[3]

[1] Ibid., pp. XL-XLI.

[2] Ibid., p. XLII.

[3] *Proceedings of the Comptrolling Council of Revenue*, Murshidabad, Vol. VIII, dated 30th December, 1771, (Purnea Letter No. 523).

Second, Ducarel decided to take certain areas under direct Government management in respect of cultivation. The Parganas, that satisfactorily survived the perilous famine, were allowed to continue in the hands of the farmers but as Ducarel himself put it, 'Four Parganas which appeared so much hurt the last year (1769), we were obliged to take under our own Management and put them in a small Etman (Farm) of two, three or four villages'. By way of explanation for resorting to the scheme of small farms, he states that as there was dearth of persons of considerable property which rendered the 'mode of large farms less eligible'. In addition to this, he was also 'obliged to take the Parganas of Nathpur and Sultanpur out of Hands of the Farmers and put them in those of people experienced in the collection', on account of the fact that there was mismanagement in these Parganas and their revenue was in danger of falling short.[1]

Third, he stopped as far as possible the fradulent transaction in granting *pattas* or leases to the *raiyats*. By granting leases under his signature, Ducarel frustrated the evil designs of such revenue farmers or their agents as earned through bribes in lieu of granting low rate *pattas* to the tenants. The revenue farmers were further forbidden to exact anything more than what was written in the lease of the *raiyats*.[2]

Fourth, Ducarel encouraged the tenants of Pargana Dharampur to cultivate waste lands in addition to their own land and for this he levied a nominal increase on their previous lands, which the *raiyats* gladly accepted.[3]

Finally, a number of Sair duties, which obstructed trade, were also abolished.[4]

[1] *Proceedings of the Comptrolling Council of Revenue*, Murshidabad, Vol. II, dated 13th December, 1770, (Purnea Letter No. 118).

[2] Ibid., Vol. VIII, dated 30th December, 1771, ... (Purnea Letter No. 523).

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

Thus, in the words of Ducarel, 'wealth, trade and number of inhabitants' are deemed to be the sources of revenues and all these had greatly diminished under the weak, corrupt and inefficient administration of Purnea in the post-Plassey period.[1] But Ducarel devoted himself to the 'purpose of recovering the fine country to a flourishing state', as Becher had expected of him[2] and he so confidently performed his duties that he proclaimed that a deviation from the measures he proposed and adopted, may take back the district 'to the same Distressed and ruinous situation wherein for the four first years of the Diwani it notoriously stood almost beyond that of any other in Bengal.[3]

The Administration of Justice

The grant of Diwani by the Emperor Shah Alam II and the agreement with Nawab Najmuddoula endowed the Company with a legal authority not only over the revenue but also the civil and military administration of the province of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, but the English accepted the revenues but did not undertake the care of the country.[4] Clive's Double Government had as its basis a policy of non-intervention as far as possible in all matters relating to civil administration and justice. Old indigenous system of administering justice was allowed to continue. The Mufassil or indigenous courts were under the jurisdiction of the zamindars. But in a vast area like Purnea there was no regular court of justice before the year 1765.[5] As in the matter of collecting revenue, British authorities did not take the direct responsibility until 1770 when British supervisors were appointed in the districts The supervisors were required to enforce justice and extirpate

[1] Ibid.

[2] *The Letter Copy Book of the Resident at the Darbar at Murshidabad*, (Introduction) p. XXIII.

[3] *Proceedings of the Comptrolling Council of Revenue*, Murshidabad, Vol. V. dated 8th July, 1771, (Purnea Letter No. 277).

[4] Majumdar, N. *Justice and Police in Bengal*, Calcutta, (1960), P. 63.

[5] *Proceedings of the Comptrolling Council of Revenue*, Murshidabad dated 13th December, 1770.

corruption, apart from investigating revenue demands, etc. Initially the authority of the Supervisor in Purnea did not extend beyond a mere controlling power on the Nawab's officers. He was only to recommend necessary regulations, the final decision was left to the Nawab's Ministers. G. G. Ducarel, the Supervisor af Purnea, found that arbitrary fines under the name of Abwab Faujdari were framed as part of the Jama or rent roll of each Pargana to the intolerable vexation of all shades of people.

The revenue farmers judged the criminals in their respective areas and fined them according to the 'circumstances of the accused' and not the degree of delinquency. Thefts and murders were often compounded for four or five rupees while fornication and witchcraft were punished with four or five thousands. A certain set of people called 'Gunni Mahal' made the discovery of witchcraft, their profession and generally laid their hands on affluent people instead of the old and impotent as was prevalent elsewhere. There were many women who lived by discovery of fornication and adultery. The slightest evidence was sufficient to warrant a fine to the extent of the circumstances of the delinquent. Ducarel issued definite orders prohibiting such fines. Exemplary punishment was awarded for infraction of this order. Ducarel had no information of the former customs prevailing during the heyday of the native government, but through his enquiries he could gather that for many years past there was no court of Public justice in Purnea. Even though Adalat had been established there after the acquisition of Diwani, its administration was extremely loose as the Faujdar, had little regard for the welfare of the area on account of his uncertain tenure of office. To overcome the above situation Ducarel took measures to ensure justice as free, open and convenient as possible. Two regular courts were held every week in the presence of the Faujdar and decisions were arrived at with regard to laws and customs of the locality. Ducarel himself attended to these proceedings and these were transmitted monthly to the Sadar Adalat. Ducarel had the satisfaction that his efforts yielded favourable results. Whereas formerly the complaints were so numerous

that it was almost useless to attempt to decide them, now he hardly ever had a complaint except the disputes of litigious people, which was common everywhere.[1]

In some cases Ducarel successfully intervened in the sentences passed by Naib Nazim himself. On 18th February, 1771, Ducarel transmitted certain proceedings of theft and robbery to the Murshidabad Council for proper measures. As for robbery, the Sardar and six others of a principal gang of professional robbers had been put into custody. Ducarel ordered the strictest search to be made for the remainder of that gang and also recommended the severest sentences to be executed near the spot where the robberies had been committed with a view to striking terror among other criminals. There were, however, some difficulties because of which Ducarel failed to get results proportionate to his reforms. In his report to the Comptrolling Council of Revenue, he recommended for approbation the proceedings against one Ramjee who was sentenced to death according to the Mohammadan Law for murdering a child for the sake of some silver ornaments. Two other cases were also included in the report. In one of them, one 'Kylih' of purgana Dharampur was charged for stealing Rs 400 of the government revenue. In other 'Dynaullah' was accused of having robbed Mir Haferullah of seven rupees, a horse, a sword and other things after making him senseless by giving him *bhang* and other intoxicating liquors. In such cases, according to Mohammadan Law, one hand and one foot of the accused was to be chopped off but Ducarel in these and similar cases proposed that the criminals should be asked to work in public works for such a time as the nature of their crime demanded.[2]

In their reply, the Murshidabad Council expressed inability to alter the sentences already passed by the Nizamat Adalat in accordance with Mohammadan Law. Ducarel, however, insisted on exemplary punishments being inflicted upon the

[1] *Proceedings of the Comptrolling Council of Revenue*, Murshidabad, dated the 13th December, 1770 (Letter from Ducarel, December 3, 1770).

[2] ———'dated 18th February, 1771.

criminals in order to enable him to cope with the frequent robberies which were committed in every part of the district.[1] Ducarel remained undaunted and persuaded the Naib Nazim to change his order himself to provide safety to those neighbours who were concerned in the apprehension of the notorious criminals.

Nonetheless, the inadequacy of his powers, and the insufficiency of the police forces were great stumbling blocks in the path of Ducarel's reforms. Further more, the zamindars and *thanadars* of Purnea could hardly be expected to maintain public order as they could not shield themselves against the assaults of dacoits. Ducarel wrote, 'Hardly a day passed, that I do not hear of some barefaced robbery on the houses of the most answerable tenants'.[2] This phenomenal rise in robberies, murders and other sort of crimes was due largely to the famine of 1769-70, which by sapping the economic life of the people of the district forced many of them into a life of crime.

One can very safely say that Purnea owes a lot to G. G. Ducarel, who through his untiring efforts very nearly succeeded in stablishing a responsible administration on modern pattern, i.e. an administration which primarily concerned itself with maintenance of peace and order as well as promotion of the welfare of the people. But for the disastrous famine of 1770 he greatly succeeded in improving the material condition of the people and rendered justice to them sufficiently free, open and convenient. The works of the first collector can provide the ideal for the collectors of the district even today.

GENERAL CHANGES IN THE ADMINISTRATIVE SET UP :

Meanwhile a change in the district administrative set up was being contemplated by the policy-makers. From the very beginning the Supervisors found themselves confronted by a

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[1] Ibid., dated 25th February 1771.

[2] *Proceedings of the Comptrolling Council of Revenue*, Murshidabad, dated 4th April, 1771.

most formidable passive opposition from the Indian Revenue Collectors of Amils, who represented 'that collection of statistical information on the part of the supervisors would stop the collection of revenue.[1] The famine of 1770 also greatly hampered the efforts of the supervisors to secure the promotion of agriculture and improvement in the state of administration.[2] It was also difficult for them to be effective in view of the limitaions on them arising from internal conflicts between authorities at higher levels, viz. the Select Committee and the Council at Fort William.[3] Above all, in the opinion of the Directors, the supervisors devoted themselves more in monopolising the trades in the districts for their individual benefits than to their assigned job.[4] Consequently the supervisors, who had been designated collectors vide Warren Hastings reforms of May, 1772, were recalled from the districts and were substituted by Indian Diwans who worked under the immediate supervision of the Provincial Councils. The three Diwani Provinces were divided into six divisions—Burdwan, Murshidabad, Dinajpur, Dacca and Patna—each under a Provincial Council. Purnea was attached to Dinajpur Council. This arrangement continued upto 1781, when the Provincial Councils were abolished and a Committee of Revenue consisting of five most able and experienced civil servants of the Company was established at the Presidency. Though the Collectors were reinstated in the districts, they were nothing more than mere figureheads. They were not trusted even as collecting agency and the zamindars were encouraged to pay their revenue directly into the Khalsa at Calcutta.[5] Thus, during all these years a central control coupled with a defective local agency had been established

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[1] Firminger, W K (Editor). *The Fifth Report*, Vol. I, (Introduction) Calcutta',... (1917), p. CLXXXXII.

[2] Mishra, B. B. *The Central Administration of the East India Company*, 1773-1834, London, O.U.P. (1959), p. 113.

[3] Ibid., p. 112.

[4] Firminger, W. K. (Editor). Op. cit., p. CLXXXIII.

[5] Ascoli, F. D. *Early Revenues Histo'y of Bengal and the Fifth Report*, 1812, Oxford (1917), pp. 35-36.

which did not augur well for the district, as will be seen later, while discussing the results of the investigations ordered by Lord Cornwallis. It may be mentioned here that Purnea generally used to be given in farm for the purpose of revenue collections. During the first four years after the acquisition of the Diwani the actual work of government remained in the hands of natives[1], but as early as 1769 Purnea was let out in farm for three years.[2] Since the revenue policy of the Company during these seven years was a total failure, the Board of Directors directed the authorities in India to assume the direct management of the revenues through the agency of the Company's servants. During this period, the general consensus of opinion favoured the settlement of land preferably with the zamindars for a period of years and also the necessity for granting leases to the *raiyats*. Accordingly quinquennial settlement of 1772-1777 was made which was based on the policy of letting the lands to the highest bidders. This led to ruinous rack-renting and impeded the general improvement of agriculture.[3] The farmers of the revenue offered more than they could pay, and at the end of the period they were 2½ millions in arrears. Hastings following instructions from home, returned to the system of annual leases and accordingly settlements were made during the years 1778, 1779 and 1780. This precarious tenure by universal consent was a mistake. The flow of capital to the land was checked. The revenue steadily diminished and average produce fell short of what it had been earlier.[4] Though the policy of annual settlements was continued until 1786, there was growing tendency towards permanency. Neither the government nor the zamindars and the *raiyats* were in favour of the existing system.[5] Cornwallis on his arrival in India

[1] Hunter, W. W. *The Annals of Rural Bengal*, Calcutta (1965), p. 137.

[2] *Proceedings of the Comptrolling Council of Revenue, Murshidabad*, Vol. VIII, dated 30th December, 1771, (Purnea Letter No. 523).

[3] Mishra, B. B. *The Central Administration of the East India Company, 1773-1834*, ... (1959), p. 180.

[4] Firminger, W. K. *The Fifth Report*, Vol. I. Calcutta, (1917), p. 10.

[5] Mishra, Madaneswar. *Some Aspects of the Land Revenue History of Purnea District*, (1971), pp. 103-104.

found agriculture and trade decaying, ryots and zamindars sinking into poverty and moneylenders the only flourishing class in the community. The annual tenure was not regarded favourably by the British Parliament of landlords, who looked upon the zamindars as landholders in the ordinary sense of the word.[1] In 1784 Pitt's India Act was passed. Section 39 of this Act directed that the conditions governing the collection of land revenue should be 'forthwith enquired into and fully investigated' and 'permanent rules' for the future regulation of the payments and services due 'from the rajas, zamindars and other native landholders' should be established.[2] Lord Cornwallis came to India in 1786 to execute these directions. The Court of Directors further urged Cornwallis to make on the basis of the said investigations a ten-year's settlement with the zamindars, which was eventually to be declared permanent, if it proved satisfactory.

COLLECTORSHIP OF HEATLY AND COMING IN OF THE PERMANENT SETTLEMENT

Accordingly orders were issued for proceeding with the investigations and on 10th August, 1787 the Board of Revenue forwarded a plan for the settlement of the district of Purnea[3] and asked the Collector to furnish information as to the amount of assessment and the persons with whom the settlements were to be made. The collector was thus asked to enquire into (*i*) the circumstances of land and people, (*ii*) the amount at which to settle the land and (*iii*) the persons with the settlements were to be made.

S. Heatly was the Collector of Purnea then. A letter from him dated 7th March, 1788 to the Board of Revenue is still extant.[4] It gives a very complete account of the state of the

[1] Roberts, P. E. *History of British India*, London. (1958), p. 228.

[2] Dodwell, H. H (Editor). *The Cambridge History of India*, Vol. V, Delhi (1968), p. 430

[3] *Proceedings of the Board of Revenue*, August 10, 1787, No. 3.

[4] *Purnea Collectorate English Records*, Vol. III, Heatly's letter of the 7th March, 1788.

district at that time. He has referred to a number of causes that led to the decrease of revenue. Once again, as in the case of Ducarel's investigation, it was pointed out that corrupt and depraved practices by the revenue collecting agencies was the chief cause. The following, according to Heatly, were the causes of decrease in revenue :

(1) The reduction of rates consequent on the desertion of the principal inhabitants after the abolition of the office of the Faujdar.

(2) The removal of Khalsa or treasury from Murshidabad to Calcutta in 1771, which materially affected the value of the land. This could have been so because Purnea no longer enjoyed the advantage of being nearer to the capital. Purnea enjoyed a flourishing trade in grain and timber when Murshidabad was the capital.[1]

(3) The increase of *bazee zamin* or alienated or unassessed lands also led to the decrease in the revenue potential of Purnea. It is difficult to assess the exact area of unassessed lands in the district, but much land was eliminated because of collusion between Mandals, Patwaries and the *raiyati*.[2] In Pargana Sripur in 1786 there were one lakh and five thousand bighas of *bazee zamin*, i.e. more than half the area of Pargana Sripur.[3] The deficiency in the revenue of Dharampur Pargana to the extent of Rs 45,000 was on account of *bazee zamin*.[4] The Collector estimated the area of unassessed lands in Gondwara Pargana to be half the area of that Pargana. Thus, there was a tendency to have lands without any assessment and this naturally

[1] *Proceedings of the Comptrolling Council of Revenue*, Murshidabad, Vol. III, dated 21st January, 1771 (Purnea Letter No. 23).
Ibid., dated 31st January, 1771 (Purnea Letter No. 31).

[2] *Proceedings of the Board of Revenue*, Vol. 41, dated 13th June, 1788. (Purnea Letter No. 1).

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

had adverse effect on the revenue capabilities of the district.

(4) Another cause was the defalcation by the Kanungoes, Amils and zamindars. The Kanungoes and their deputies were hopelessly incompetent and corrupt They drew large salaries but did nothing, leaving the administration of their offices to unpaid Naibs or deputies who naturally had to depend on extortion and collusive transaction for their livelihood. The local subordinate revenue agency of Mandals and Patwaries or the headman of a village who sometimes acted as the agent of the zamindar, letting the lands and receiving the rents, had taken it upon themselves to issue *pattas*. Such frequent transactions as this at merely nominal rents caused substantive loss to the exchequer. The local zamindars knowing that the collector was bound, if possible, to make settlements with them naturally refrained from offering a fair price.

(5) Downward tendency in price of rice after the bumper harvest in 1771 was considered another cause of decrease in revenue. Probably owing to the enormous accumulated stocks of grain, a large area was allowed to go out of cultivation. Prices recovered their normal level, subsequently, but the downward tendency continued. On 6th February, 1772, Ducarel reported to the Comptrolling Council that the low price of grain has caused hardship to the *raiyats* in payment of rent.[1]

Hunter remarks, 'In the early records we meet more frequently with the expression of fears of an excessive than a deficient harvest.'[2] An interesting example of it is that the Collector of Purnea, W. Douglas, wrote on 23rd September,

[1] *Proceedings of the Comptrolling Council of Revenue*, Murshidabad, Vol. IX, dated 27th February, 1772 (Purnea Letter No. 108).

[2] Hunter, W W. *A Statistical Account of Bengal*, Vol. XV, London 1877' pp. 344-345.

1783 to the Committee of Revenue that because of a total failure of rice-crop in the scarcity year of 1783, price had shot up from 4 maunds per rupee in 1782 to 1 maund or 1 maund 10 seers per rupee in 1783' and so to avert the dreadful effects of a scarcity, he stopped the exports of rice from Purnea [1] But the Committee of Revenue, apparently afraid of accumulation of grain, asked the Collector to withdraw his orders.[2]

Having investigated into the ills of the economy of Purnea, Heatly took up the other task of finding out the amount at which to settle the farms in Purnea. The figured statements appended to Heatly's letter to the Board of Revenue, dated 7th March, 1788, present a very complete picture of the State of things in Purnea on the eve of the Decennial Settlement in 1789. The actual demand and collections for a term of 22 years for the district was assessed at a total of Rs 1,71,16,120. The average was, thus, Rs 12,22,580.[3] This compares well with what was Ducarel's 'medium revenue'. According to Ducarel's statement of accounts, the revenue remitted from Purnea during the period 1765 to 1770 was as follows : [4]

REVENUE REMITTED FROM PURNEA DURING THE PERIOD 1765 TO 1770

Year	*Amount remitted in Rs*
1765	11,12,343
1766	14,95,608
1767	12,97,603
1768	14,44,790
1769	11,60,279
1770	11,38,712
Total	76,49,335
Yearly average	12,74,889

[1] *Proceedings of the Committee of Revenue*, dated 17th October, 1783, (Purnea Letter No. 19).

[2] Ibid, dated 27th October, 1783, (Purnea Letter No. 7).

[3] *Proceedings of the Board of Revenue*, dated 13th and 17th June, 1788. Purnea Letter Vol. 41. Appendix to the letter written by the Collector of Purnea on 7th March, 1788.

Mishra, Madaneshwar. *Some Aspects of the Land Revenue History of Purnea District* (1971), p. 66.

[4] *Proceedings of the Comptrolling Council of Revenue*, Murshidabad, Vol. VII, dated 30th December, 1771, (Purnea Letter No. 523).

The differences in the figures given by Ducarel and Heatly, notwithstanding, it is clear that Purnea paid between 12 to 13 lakhs of rupees yearly from the assumption of the Diwani to the eve of the Decennial Settlement. The average of revenue remittance remains more or less the same as above even if Heatly's proposal for settlement in 1788 and a progressive enhancement of half an anna per rupee per year thereon, is taken into consideration. It is sufficient to state, leaving the parganawise details aside, that Heatly proposed a total of Rs 10,79,452 for the year 1788 A.D. and calculated the assessment for 1793 after the proposed enhancement at a total of Rs 12,16,325.[1]

As regards the persons with whom the settlements were to be made, Mr. Heatly's letter of the 7th march, 1788 may again be referred. A history of the different zamindars and zamindaries of the district is given in that letter. It may, be mentioned here that preference was given to the zamindars in the settlement of their zamindaries.

The proposal of the Collector for settlement was accepted more or less without any substantial alteration for the Decennial Settlement of 1789.[2] According to Hunter a re-assessment was carried out in 1792 by Colebrooke, then Assistant Collector and Purnea was assessed at Rs 12,49,261.[3] This was practically the same as the assessments of Ducarel and Heatly. Almost the whole of the district was then permanently settled for the amount mentioned above. The settlement was concluded with 38 proprietors of 36 estates. Pargana Kankjol was not permanently settled till 1847 owing to the recusancy of the zamindar.[4] The following were the chief landholders of the district with whom the Permanent Settlement was effected :

[1] *Proceedings of the Board of Revenue*, dated 13th and 17th June, 1788, Vol. 41.

[2] Ibid., dated 17th June, 1788, Vol. 41 (Purnea Letter No. 1).

[3] Hunter, W. W. *A Statistical Account of Bengal*, Vol. XV, London (1877), p. 329.

[4] Byrne, J. *Final Report on the Survey and Settlement Operation—District of Purnea (1901-1908)*, Calcutta (1908), p. 25.

(1) Rani Indrawati was the zamindar of Parganas Sultanpur, Sripur, Fattehpur Singhia, Haveli Katihar, Kumaripur, Gorari and Nathpur. These Parganas comprised about 2000 square miles in area.

(2) Raja Madhab Singh Darbhanga was the zamindar of Dharmpur with an area of 1063 square miles, i.e. one-fifth of of the whole district.

(3) Saiyad Fakhruddin Hussain held Pargana Surjapur which was 726 square miles in area.

(4) Bakaullah held Pargana Badaur having an area of 295 square miles.

(5) Shivnath and Gourinath were joint proprietors of Tajpur having an area of 180 square miles.

(6) Dular Singh was the zamindar of Pargana Tirakhardah with an area of 76 square miles.[1]

Thus, after a number of experiments the British settled down in favour of permanancy with regard to land revenue. Upon this famous Permanent Settlement historians have passed diametrically opposite judgements. According to J. C. Marshman,

> 'It was a bold, brave and wise measure. Under the genial influence of this territorial charter, which for the first time created indefeasible rights and interests in the soil, population has increased, cultivation has been extended, and a gradual improvement has become visible in the habits and comfort of the people.'[2]

On the other hand Beveridge says,

> '...A very great blunder as well as gross injustice was committed.'[3]

[1] Hunter, W. W. *A Statistical Account of Bengal*, Vol. XV, London (1877), p. 392.

[2] Marshman, J. C. *The History of India*, Vol. II, (1871), p. 35

[3] Beveridge, H. *A Comprehensive History of India*, Vol. II, p. 631

Examining the two apparently irreconcilable statements in the context of Purnea, we find that the latter statement is nearer the truth. As a result of the Permanent Settlement, the class of the zamindars prospered at the cost of the community, because while the Government revenue remained fixed the rental of the zamindar went on increasing.[1] Another important result was that the properties of the zamindars began to disintegrate and the bankers and investors from outside started to have a grip over landed property within the district. According to the provisions of the Permanent Settlement, zamindari became heritable, saleable and also could be partitioned. A number of Calcutta Banias and European investors took advantage of the provision and acquired rights in landed property in Purnea.[2] Thus, the Permanent Settlement, though avoided the evils of periodical assessments, which, at however, long intervals, produce economic dislocation, evasion, the concealment of wealth, and the deliberate throwing of land out of cultivation, yet it did not augur well for the economy of Purnea because of the reasons mentioned above.

While concluding land revenue administration in Purnea, it may be mentioned here that the reason why relatively more space has been provided to this aspect in the present narrative is that land revenue was almost the only source of taxation in Purnea district not only upto 1793 but even during much later years. In 1792-93 the total revenue of Purnea from all sources amounted to Rs 12,60,495 and out of it, Rs 12,49,269 came by way of land revenue alone. Other heads of revenue were excise, costs realised through civil courts in Government cases, sale proceeds of stolen property, refunds by the Magistrate, revenue fines etc.[3] The land revenue, thus, was the chief source

[1] Mishra, Madaneshwar. *Some Aspects of the Land Revenue History of Purnea District*, (1971), pp. 199-200.

[2] Ibid, pp. 201-203.

[3] Hunter, W. W. *A Statistical Account of Bengal*, Vol. XV, London (1877), p. 394.

of Government income and naturally the state activity in any other sphere than the land revenue remained inhibited.[1]

THE STATE OF JUDICAL ADMINISTRATION :

As regards providing protection to persons and property, which is considered to be main responsibility of modern government, the British do not seem to have covered much ground in Purnea district. We have already seen the state of justice during the time when G. G. Ducarel was Supervisor of Purnea and warren Hastings was the Governor-General of Bengal. Since then, however, Purnea some-how or other, escaped the attention of the British reformers. To make things worse the Adalat of Purnea was shifted to Darbhanga in 1782.[2] Justice was thrown at a distance from Purnea. Revenue Collectors continued to be administrators of justice. All this led to the increase in crimes, particularly along the Nepal frontiers. This was left to Cornwallis to complete the work began by Warren Hastings. He vested the collection of the revenues and the administration of justice in separate officers. An ascending hierarchy of civil and criminal courts was established, consisting of (1) small courts for the recovery of petty debts, presided over by native commissioners, (2) District and City Courts under a British Judge with native assessors, (3) four Provincial Courts and (4) the Courts of Appeal. With regard to Purnea, however, the position was not very satisfactory. According to available records there were just two civil courts in 1793 in Purnea. Though the situation improved during the years after Permanent Settlement, Purnea remained somewhat neglected during the period under our review.

TRADE AND COMMERCE :

Thus during their administration of about a quarter of a century the British concentrated upon the administration of

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[1] Mishra, Madaneshwar. *Some Aspect of Land Revenue History of Purnea District* (1971), p. 200-201.

[2] Majumdar, N. *Justice and police in Bengal*, Calcutta, ... (1960), p. 184. Patra, Atul Chandra. *The Administration of Justice under the East India Company in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa*, Bombay (1962), p. 152.

land revenue and only on fringe touched the judicial administration. They had hardy time to devote to the promotion of trade and commerce. Nevertheless, Purnea had close relations with Nepal, Bhutan, China and various town of Northern India, particularly Bengal. The important features of trade in Purnea was that articles were imported from one place and were exported to other. Seldom they were kept for local consumption. A big list of articles of export and import is available in Buchanan's Account of Purnea,[1] but that should not lead us to conclude that Purnea was commercially flourishing. As a matter of fact there were such manufactures as tent-making, making of ornaments of lac and impure soda, preparation or inlaying of bidviware, etc., in Purnea, but they were all languishing. Cotton-weaving was a considerable industry, but the famine of 1770 gave a fatal blow to it. According to Ducarel, the weavers, in spite of their double source of income from land as well as from Company's Factory, could not withstand the ravages of famine and half the number died.[2] Purnea earned a distinction of its own so far as indigo industry is concerned. The first indigo factory in Purnea was built in about 1775 at Nilganj, a few miles south of the town of Purnea.[3] As already shown, rice was often so cheap and abundant that it did not even return the cost of harvesting it and, therefore, people took to the cultivation of indigo. The early British settlers contributed a lot in promoting indigo industry. Similarly, tobacco was one of the chief articles of export from the district. The Collector of Purnea in 1789 informed the Board of Revenue that about 50,000 maunds of tobacco were produced annually in Purnea, out of which about 30,000 maunds were exported to Murshidabad and Calcutta.

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[1] Buchanan, Francis. *An Account of the District of Purnea*, ... Calcutta (1911), p. 556.

[2] *Proceedings of the Comptrolling Council of Revenue*, Murshidabad, dated 30th December, 1771. Purnea Letter No. 523.

[3] O'Malley, L. S. S. *Bengal District Gazeteers—Purnea*, Calcutta, ... (1911), pp. 126-127.

The quantity imported in the district was negligible.[1] Amongst agricultural product the British administration took care to promote the cultivation of sugarcane in the district. But this was also done only with a view to meet the demand of sugar in England.[2] Since rice often posed a problem on account of its scarcity or cheapness, the Committee of Grain in 1783, recommended for encouragement to the cultivation of wheat.[3] To be fair to the British administrators, it should be mentioned tried to introduce new crops in the district after the great famine as a second line of defence against possible failure of crops. Potato, poppy, maize, etc., were the main crops. But this again was done after 1793.

To sum up, the administrative set up during the time of the later Mohammadan rulers had completely collapsed in Purnea and it was left to the British to make attempt at reconstructing the same. Right from the beginning of their administration the British directed their energy in this direction. In 1770, when the first British officer came in Purnea, the people were fortunate to have the services of G.G. Ducarel as Supervisor. Fortunately also the Governor-General of Bengal was the matchless Warren Hastings who gave up the dubious policy of Clive of divorcing power from responsibility and assumed direct responsibility of administration. Soon after taking over the administration of Purnea Ducarel introduced a number of measures to improve the material conditions of the people in the district. He extended protection to *raiyats*, stopped arbitrary fines and other acts of oppression, brought a large area of land under cultivation under the direct Government supervision and also encouraged the people to cultivate waste land. All these measures were calculated to improve the economic condition of the district, but the great famine of 1770 drained out much of

[1] *Purnea Collectorate English Records*, Vol. V, Letter No. 73, dated 27th May, 1789 to the Board of Revenue.

[2] Ibid., Vol. VI, Circular No. 654 from the Board of Revenue to the Collector, dated 16th September, 1792.

[3] *Proceedings of the Committee of Revenue*, dated 1st December, 1783.

the administrative energy and Ducarel could not pursue his scheme of reforms with as much of devotion as the colossal problems required of him or as he himself would have liked to. In the sphere of administration of justice Purnea did not have any court of justice formerly, but after the British acquired Diwani, Adalat was established there. Ducarel tried to render justice as free, open and convenient as possible. But in this field again his success was limited on account of recurring scarcities which gave rise to of crimes, and troubles along the northern frontier as well as the marauding activities of the zamindars. The situation went on worsening till in 1786 Lord Cornwallis came to India as Governor-General. In the field of revenue administration the successive experiments in quinquennial and annual settlements had failed and the enquiries of S. Heatly, the then Collector of Purnea revealed that on account of instability in the mode of revenue assessment the zamindars and the land revenue-collectors not only oppressed people, but also deprived the Government of the fixed revenue demands through fraudulent methods. It was therefore, thought to make settlements in perpetuity and accordingly the Permanent Settlement was concluded in 1793. This measure, though avoided the evils of periodical assessments, concealment of wealth, deliberate throwing the land out of cultivation and the like, yet it provided the opportunity to the zamindars to flourish at the cost of the community. Something was also done in regard to providing protection to people and property, but as already shown, Purnea remained neglected. The district had only two civil courts in 1793. Apart from these, nothing substantial was done in any other field. Trade and commerce as well as agriculture received only very limited attention. To conclude, the British made attempts at reconstructing administrative machinery in Purnea during their rule of about a quarter of a century, but not with any great success.

CHAPTER VIII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

CIVILIZATION DAWNED LATE

Owing to fertility of land and overall prosperity that prevailed, the original inhabitants of Purnea district stuck to their homes and we have hardly any record showing any large scale emigration of the people from Purnea. Similarly Purnea had always an 'insalubrious and uncongenial' climate that created an extremely evil reputation for the district among the Indian community. This factor made the people of other districts so afraid of Purnea that they never came and settled in the district. We, therefore, do not have any instance of large scale immigration of people into Purnea. This almost complete absence of emigration and immigration kept Purnea rather separated from outside world and consequently civilization, in the sense it is generally used, dawned upon Purnea compartively late. The people of the district naturally do not have claims to have come into prominence during the Aryan period.

CLAIMS TO ANTIQUITY AND EARLY HISTORY

Early history of Purnea is shrouded in obscurity. No records of the bygone days have been preserved. It is with great difficulty that a history of Purnea can be constructed. Nevertheless, the Hindus of the district have some claim to antiquity and early civilization. The remains of the forts of Satligarh or Sikligarh in village Dharara and Benugarh, Barijangarh and Asuragarh in the Kishanganj Subdivision are attributed to historical personages. Any number of traditions and myths have grown around them, but they do not form even a semblance of a connected narrative. The earliest inhabitants of the district are believed to have been Angas to the west and the Pundras to the East. While the former are generally grouped with the Bengal tribes, the latter are classed

among the most degraded classes of men in the Aitereya Brahman.

Bhim, the great celebrity of Mahabharat is said to have defeated great Pundra king Vasudeva and annexed the land of the Vangas, Pundras and Kiratas. Independent till sixth century B.C. Anga fell into the imperialist bag of the Magadhan ruler Bimbisar (Circa 519 B.C.), and Paundra Vardhan, the name later given to the land of the Pundras, also lost its independence to him. Afterwards the district formed a part of the empire of the Imperial Guptas since the reign of Samudragupta (Circa 340 A.D.), till Mahabhuti Varman of Kamrup put an end to the same in sixth century A.D. Later, the great Buddhist emperor, Harsha extended his sway over Purnea district. Then ensued a period of chaos and taking advantage of which the Palas established their rule over Purnea (ninth to twelfth Century A.D.). On the ruins of the Pala Kingdom rose the Senas, but meantime, a new force had emerged on the arena of Indian political scene. At the end of the twelfth century the Muslims under Bakhtiyar Khilji burst down upon Bengal and soon Mohammadan rule was established over Purnea. Very little is known about the district till seventeenth century A.D. It is only known that it formed the frontier Sarkar of Mohammadan Bengal and that in the war between Sher Shah and Humayun, it supplied the latter with some levies.

MUSLIM ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEM

It was only after the Mohammadan rule was firmly established that we get first instances of administrative system prevailing in the district. During the Mughal rule, Purnea formed a great military frontier province under the rule of a Faujdar. Entire Mughal territorial jurisdiction used to be divided into Subas and the latter into Sarkars. Subas had Subadars as their rulers and beneath them were the Faujdars. The duties of the Faujdars were mainly twofold. First, to preserve peace and overawe and restrain the zamindars who were often source of oppression and disorder and second, to manage revenue administration. People looked up to him for justice and protection. In the context of revenue administration

the jurisdiction of a Faujdar was also termed as Chakla. A Faujdar 'secured his appointment by speculative offers of lump-sums of revenue which he pledged himself to collect.' Theoretically the Faujdar was appointed by the Emperor and was removable by his authority only. The zamindars within his jurisdiction were all subordinate to him.

Boundary of Purnea Before 1722

The boundary of Purnea under the Mohammadan rulers was the river Kosi on the west. Flowing a little west of the present Purnea town and proceeding southward Kosi fell into the Ganges somewhere near Karbagola. The northern boundary was some 14 miles north from the present town of Purnea, where the frontier fort Jalalgarh existed. From Jalalgarh the boundary ran eastward passing a little north of the junction of the Mahananda and Kankai rivers and then to the south to a point where the present pargana of Surjapur of Purnea bordered the district of Dinajpur.

Administration of Saif Khan—Territorial Acquisition and Prosperity

First additions to the aforesaid territorial jurisdiction were made by Saif Khan in 1732 when he over-ran Birnagar to punish its refractory chief Bir Shah and again in 1738 when taking advantage of internal dissensions in Morang, a frontier district of Nepal, Saif Khan took out on an expedition to that territory of Rajputs. Through these expeditions he extended the jurisdiction of Purnea by one-third towards the west and almost an equal area towards the north. The area of Purnea after these conquests swelled up to 5119 square miles. Consequent upon these conquests Saif Khan also enhanced his revenues. The yearly, revenue collection in his time amounted to Rs 18,00,000. He has been unanimously hailed as the 'first and most famous of the provincial rulers.' Though we have references of Nawabs Ostawal Khan, Asfandiyar Khan and Babhandiyar Khan, etc., before Saif Khan, yet all that has come down to us of the time of the former Nawabs is just a vague and incomplete list of their names. Saif Khan on the other hand' not only made great territorial acquisitions for Purnea, but ruled with great ability and distinction and contributed in a big way to the betterment of the material conditions of the people. He received almost unqualified support from the successive Nawabs of Bengal, Murshid Quli Jafar Khan, Shuja Khan and Alivardi Khan, in all his ventures. Saif Khan made himself so strong that he never submitted any revenue accounts to Murshidabad Court.

Administration Of Saiyad Ahmad Khan—Consolidation.

Material prosperity and peace and order that Purnea enjoyed in the time of Saif Khan were further enhanced and consolidated by Saiyad Ahmad Khan, the nephew and son-in-law of Nawab Alivardi Khan, who ruled over Purnea for seven years. Saif Khan was succeeded for few months by his son Fakhruddin Hussain Khan, whose rule is worthy of notice for nothing but his thoughtless and amusing acts. Purnea was bound to suffer under this wayward prince, but luckily the district soon got the services of Saiyad Ahmad Khan who dealt firmly with the lawless elements as in the case of the zamindar of Khagra and successfully endeavoured to promote 'the comfort and welfare of his subjects both nobles and husbandmen.' He appears to have realised the great truth of history that a ruler's personal example is very much responsible in shaping the character of the administration and, therefore, he gave up the depraved habits of his earlier life and devoted properly to each duty concerning statecraft and also to his own well-being both in this world and the world beyond. With him ended the age of peace and prosperity.

Administration On Shaukat Jang—Interregnum.

A new age of decay and disorder was to start in Purnea and Saiyad Ahmad Khan's son and successor Shaukat Jang through his thoughtless acts set the ball rolling. Towards the end of his life Saiyad Ahmad Khan had started making efforts to secure the Subadary of Bengal. Shaukat Jang quite unwisely pursued these efforts further which brought him into conflict with Sirajuddoula, his cousin and Nawab of Bengal. The two

equally ignorant, haughty, misguided and ambitious princes engaged in a struggle that endangered the future not only of Purnea but also of Bengal, indeed the whole of India. The Faujdars of Purnea from Saif Khan to Shaukat Jang were all connected by ties of friendship and kinship with the Nawabs of Bengal and naturally this was a great source of strength to them. While this advantageous position was exploited by Saif Khan and Saiyad Ahmad Khan to strengthen the material conditions of the people of Purnea, Shaukat Jang disastrously utilised it only to give troubles to his subordinates. Through his extremely audacious behaviour the latter alienated and antagonised his trusted officers and servants. Furthermore, Saif Khan and Saiyad Ahmad Khan had pursued a policy of avoiding confrontation with the Nawabs of Bengal and thus saved their energy which was utilized for the good of people, but Shaukat Jang, on his part, did all to excite Sirajuddoula to set out on an expedition against him. The two princes pulled wires against each other and the result was not only the defeat and massacre of Shaukat Jang and his army in the Battle of Baldiabari, but also weakening of Sirajuddoula. Had they acted wisely and concertedly the course of history might have favourably changed for Purnea and Bengal, indeed for India. The beginning of a painful end—the end of Mohammadañ rule which in last 35 years had made Purnea orderly and prosperous—was in sight.

Successive Nawabs—The Period of Decay

Shaukat Jang was succeeded by Sirajuddoula's nominee, Mohan Lal who during his very short stay at Purnea tried his best to regulate the administration and the finances of Purnea, but was soon recalled to do duty against the English at Plassey where Sirajuddoula was ultimately defeated. Nevertheless, it is during Mohan Lal's rule that we first notice a trend to drain out Purnea's wealth which in later years assumed gigantic proportions and, according to the first English Supervisor of Purnea, this was one of the major factors contributing to the poverty of Purnea. The Faujdars of Purnea since Shaukat Jang were all unscrupulous, weak and vigourless rulers.

They, more than once, plundered the people of Purnea either to satisfy the demands of the provincial rulers or their own greed, or to wage or aid useless wars. During the post-Plassey period of political revolutions, the tenure of a Faujdar became uncertain and subject to whims and wishes of the Subadar of Bengal, who himself was under tight control of the British. The district, therefore, witnessed amazingly frequent changes in the administration during the post-Plassey period and stability of the time of Saif Khan and Saiyad Ahmad Khan became a far cry. Hazir Ali Khan, Khadim Hussain Khan, Sher Ali Khan, Mir Rohiuddin Khan, Raja Suchet Roy, Raziuddin Muhammad Khan and Muhammad Ali Khan were the successive Faujdars during this period. The most characteristic feature of this period was that people were made to suffer at the hands of the Faujdars themselves. Khadim Hussain Khan had plundered every part of Purnea and left the principal inhabitants in a state of complete bankruptcy. Rohiuddin Hussain Khan pursued an extremely oppressive policy and both farmers and soldiers under him were financially squeezed to the maximum. The tenants and cultivators of Purnea were subjected to heavy charges of collection by Suchet Roy. Another characteristic feature of the period was the growth in the powers of the zamindars. The zamindars during the time of Saif Khan and Saiyad Ahmad Khan were advantageously utilised to promote the welfare of the people. The Faujdars as representatives of the Nazim, never allowed the zamindars to act outside their jurisdiction and oppress the people, who could look up to them for justice and protection. But in the changed circumstances the zamindars undertook to perform certain police, judicial and executive functions which of right did not belong to them. The people began to be oppressed by them. The oppression both by the Faujdars and the zamindars induced people to desert Purnea and the land went to waste causing poverty to the district. The political turmoils of the period were, thus, eating into the economic vitals of this district.

British Administrative Experiments

To add to the misery of the people, Purnea was visited in 1770 by what is generally known as great Bengal Famine. This

was followed by epidemics and usurpions and the life of the people was rendered miserable beyond description. To make things worse there was constant trouble along the northern frontier. Such were the conditions in the district when the British came to rule over it. The British, being primarily commercial adventurers, were naturally anxious to put an end to these troubles and evolve a system that could enhance the capacity of the land to produce more and more revenue. The administrative set up during the time of the latter Mohammadan rulers had collapsed. Without a vigorous and efficient administrative system, the British could not think of proceeding with their aim of earning as much revenue as possible without incurring the corresponding amount of trouble and at the same time performing the duties of a modern Government, i.e. maintaining peace and order and promoting the welfare of the people. Since the land revenue had been almost the only source of taxation in Purnea, the British quite understandably directed their energies towards providing a firm base to land revenue administration. Clive's dubious policy of divorcing power from responsibility proved disasterous and soon the East India Company had to assume direct responsibility of administration. In 1770, George Gustavas Ducarel was appointed the Supervisor of Purnea. He introduced a number of measures to improve the material conditions of the people in the district. He extended protection to *raiyats*, stopped arbitrary fines and other acts of oppression, brought a large area of land under cultivation under the direct Government supervision and encouraged the people to cultivate waste land. All these measures were calculated to improve the economic condition of the district but his great efforts did not provide complete answer to the problems raised by the monstrous famine. Ducarel's administration was followed by a number of unsuccessful experiments in the field of revenue administration. But the successive experiments in quinquennial and annual settlements failed. The situation went on worsening till in 1786 Lord Cornwallis came to India as Governor-General. He immediately ordered investigations to be made into these affairs. The enquiries of S. Heatly, the then Collector of Purnea, revealed

that on account of instability in the mode of revenues assessment, the zamindars and the land revenue collectors not only opepressed the people, but also deprived the Government of its mutually agreed revenue demands through fraudulent methods. It was in this context that Permanent Settlement of land revenue was concluded in 1793 which though put an end to such evils as periodical assessments, concealment of wealth and deliberate attempt to throw the land out of cultivation, etc , it, nonetheless, provided the opportunity to the zamindars to flourish at the cost of the community. Besides the administration of revenue, the British also attempted to effect a system of administration of justice. Purnea did not have any court of justice prior to this, but after the British acquired the Diwani, Adalat was established at Purnea. Ducarel tried to render justice as free, open and convenient as possible, but in this field also he had limited success on account of scarcity conditions which gave rise to incidence of crimes, the marauding activities of the zamindars and troubles along the northern frontier. In subsequent years, Purnea received only apathetic consideration in this sphere. It was again in the time of Cornwallis that the collections of revenues and the administration of justice were vested in separate officers and a district court under a British Judge with native assessors was established in Purnea. Nevertheless, the records reveal that in 1793, Purnea had just two civil courts. Apart from these, the British did nothing substantial in any other field in the district. They, thus, made experiments to evolve an administrative system in the district, but not with any great success.

Political and Administrative Changes and Their Impact on the People

Thus, Purnea during her not very long history witnessed changes in administration which for the most part adversely affected the people of the district. As has already been shown there are no records showing the existence of a system of administration in the district before the Mughal sway was established. The Mughal administrative system was primarily milltary in character. Frontier military districts like Purnea

had been put under the charge of a Faujdar who used to be the representative of the Subadar, but secured his appointment by the Emperor and was removable by the latter's authority only. Nevertheless, it was considered desirable by the Faujdars to obtain the Subadar's concurrence with regard to their appointments. The Faujdars were responsible for preserving peace and overawing and restraining the zamindars of plundering propensity. In the capacity of Amil or Intendent the Faujdar also managed the revenue administration. In a word, the Faujdar was the supreme officer in the district and people looked up to him for justice and protection. During the weak and vigourless administration of the latter Mughals, the provincial rulers attained a great amount of autonomy. The Faujdars of Purnea also began to treat the district as their personal Jagir. In such circumstances the thing that counted most in shaping the socio-economic life of the people was the personal character of the Faujdar. It was, therefore, that while the people of Purnea enjoyed peace and prosperity during the efficient and prudent administration of Saif Khan and Saiyad Ahmad Khan, they were made to suffer at the hands of the greedy and oppressive Faujdars thereafter.

After the abolition of the office of the Faujdar, the British Supervisor was sent into the district loaded with vast antiquarian works and it was too much to expect from him to raise an administrative structure of any magnitude. Though Purnea was lucky in having the services of an extremely efficeint officer, G.G. Duecarel as the first Supervisor, yet the famine of 1770 and subsequent epidemics, etc., did not allow him to apply his energy and ability singly and solely towards the establishment of an effective administrative system. It was not until the arrival of Lord Cornwallis that attempts were sincerely made for establishing a permanent administrative machinery. The result was the Permanent Settlement in the sphere of land revenue administration and the establishment of a district court under a British Judge with native assessors. Thus, by 1793, some sort of a permanent administrative machinery was established in Purnea, though not adequate to meet the requirements of the people and

to pull them out of the economic disorder in which they had been thrown ever since the days of Shaukat Jang.

History of Purnea, a History of Neglect and Apathy

To conclude, this study has been concerned mainly with describing and tracing historically the interaction of political and economic factors in shaping the destiny of the people of Purnea district. Within the narrow compass of a single district and within a limited span of time, it has been attempted to show how during the transition period, when Mughal administrative system had almost completely collapsed and the British system was making just the preliminary attempts to establish itself, the people were subjected to a number of human and natural indignations. A remarkable feature of the people of Purnea was to submit to any authority and this coupled with the tendency of the rulers, first of the Mohammadan Faujdars and later of the British revenue collecting agencies, to exploit the people impoverished the district. Time and again in its history Purnea was troubled by scarcities caused by famines and other natural calamities as well as administrative apathy. Prior to the coming of the British no attempts were made to evolve some sort of check to the recurring conditions of scarcities. The British particularly during the time of Lord Cornwallis made efforts to evolve some satisfactory system of district administration, but with little success. They cared for no other aspect of administration, but the revenue and even in that they failed. Assuming that the primary object of revenue policy is the prompt and regular realization of revenue and that the secondary object is the promotion of prosperity and the improvement of resources which yield revenue; neither of these objects was achieved during the period under examination. People of Purnea continued to be apathetically treated. The whole study makes the tragic revelation that the history of Purnea is the history of neglect, apathy, plunder and the like and most tragically, more often than not, the administrators of the district were themselves responsible for such gruesome state of affairs.

APPENDIX—A

HAVELI PURNEA ESTATE

This estate was spread over both in Bengali and Fasli Mahals of Purnea district and covered an area of nearly 2,000 square miles. The Permanent Settlement of the estate, was made with its ruler, Rani Indrawati. The Rani was the wife of Raja Indra Narayan Roy who was the son of Raja Ramchandra Narayan Roy, a Maithil Brahmin by caste. This family was known as Purnea Raja. After the death of her husband in 1785, the Rani succeeded to the huge property. According to Buchanan :

> 'It is alleged that Raghab Singh[1] had incurred the heavy displeasure of the Nawab, whose wrath was averted by the intercession of Ramchandra of Purniya, or rather of his agent, Devanand,[2] who had great influence with the Muhammadan noble. As a reward for his assistance Nathpur and Gorari were given as a present to Indra Narayan, the son of the Purniya Raja.'[3]

Parganas other than Nathpur and Gorari within this estate belonged to the Purnea Rajas from somewhat earlier. In the eighteenth century, it existed with a considerable possession and a revenue of Rs 3,74,000.[4]

Bijoy Gobind Singh, son of Bhaiyalal Jha, was adopted as successor by Rani Indrawati, after her husband Raja Indra Narayan Singh died childless. Raja Bijoy Gobind Singh lost

[1] Maharaja of Darbhanga.

[2] Devanand was the grandfather of Dular Choudhary.

[3] Buchanan, Francis. *An Account of the District of Purnea*, p. 208.

[4] Ibid., p. 509.

the estate during his own life time.[1] He died leaving behind him one son and two daughters. His son died in his early years withour any issue.

In about 1850, Babu Pratap Singh, a banker of Mushidabad, purchased entire Haveli Purnea. Babu Dharmchand Lal, a Purnea banker, son of Nakched Lal, purchased Haveli Purnea from Babu Pratap Singh. His son, Babu Prithi Chand Lal Choudhary succeeded to the entire property and acquired much more.[2]

[1] O'Malley, L. S. S. *Bengal District Gazetteers*, p. 199.

[2] Byrne, J. *Final Report on the Survey and Settlement Operation in the District of Purnea*, 1901-1908, p. XLVI

APPENDIX—B
DHARMPUR ESTATE

The magnificient property of Dharmpur estate, about 1,000 square miles in extent, has continued unimpaired, in the family of the Darbhanga Maharaja. According to Buchanan, Maharaja Raghab Singh of Darbhanga appointed Vir Singh to manage this property. Vir Singh soon turned refractory and refused to pay the revenue. He was, however, overpowered and defeated by the Purnea Nawab Saif Khan in collusion with the Mughal contingent from Delhi and the Maharaja of Darbhanga. The Pargana was annexed by Saif Khan in about 1731 to Purnea and Raghab Singh was confirmed as the zamindar of the Pargana.[1] In about 1738 Parganas Gorari and Nathpur were taken out from this property and given to Purnea Raja. Raghab Singh was succeeded by his brother, Narendra Singh, who had no issue. He adopted his relative Pratap Singh who was a direct descendent of Shubhamkar Thakur, the youngest son of Mahesh Thakur, the founder of Raj Darbhanga. Pratap Singh died childless in 1776 and was succeeded by his brother, Raja Madhab Singh, who has often been referred to as Madhu Singh in the old records. 'After various vicissitudes, the Permanent Settlement was concluded with him for Rs 1,58,227 less Rs 6,174 for his Mukarari.[2]

Chatra Singh, the second son of Madhab Singh, succeeded to the entire property in 1808 and administered the estate well till 1839. He was the first to get the title of Maharaja. On his death, he left a rent-roll of Rs 13 lakhs and about 100 lakhs in cash, but it is not known if this hoarded wealth was ever found. In 1860, the estate came under the Court of Wards.[3]

[1] Buchanan, Franis - *An Acconnt of the District of Purnea*, pp. 507-508.

[2] Byrne, J.—*Final Report on the Survey and Settlement Operation In Purnea, 1901-1908*, pp. XLVI-XLVII.

[3] Byrne, J. *Final Report on Survey and Settlement Operation Purnea, 1901-1908*, p. XIVI.

APPENDIX—C
SURJAPUR ESTATE

This estate within Pargana Surjapur has a long history. According to the chronicles of the family, the founder of the family was Sayad Khan Dastur, who assisted Humayun against Sher Shah and for his services, he was given the zamindari of Surjapur.[1] Saiyad Rai Khan married the only daughter of Dastur Khan and succeeded to all his property. He was succeeded by Jalal Khan (Saiyed Muhammad Jalaluddin Khan). He checked the Bhotiya incursions on the northern and eastern borders of Purnea and as a reward, he was bestowed with a dress of honour and the Pargana of Colgong in Bhagalpur in 1635 A.D. He was murdered by a servant and was succeeded by Mohiuddin, who lost Colgong and was issueless. He was succeeded in Surjapur by his sister's husband, Nur Muhammad who died leaving four sons—Sultan, Roushan, Maksud and Rashid. The first three held the estate one after another without partition. Maksud left three sons and a daughter. Jainuddin Muhammad, the eldest son, succeeded him. He died issueless and the succession was disputed by his two brothers, Hossain and Borhanuddin. They died even before the dispute was decided. Then Muhammad Saiyad, the Diwan of the estate, was appointed to hold the office of zamindar and Kanungo of Surjapur. He was succeeded by Jalil.[2] This Saiyad Muhammed Jalil refused to pay revenue to Nawab Saiyad Muhammad Khan of Purnea. There was a battle between the Nawab and Muhammad Jalil in which the latter was defeated and taken prisoner. His estate was confiscated but his heirs were restored to the estate by Shaukat Jang, son of Saiyad Ahmad Khan, on the intervention of Ghulam Hussain, in 1756. Ghulam Hussain, the author of *Sair-ul-Mutakharin* was at that time attached to the court of

[1] O'Malley, L.S.S. *Bengal District Gazetteer—Purnea*, (1911), p. 194.

[2] Buchanan, Francis. *An Account of the District of Purnea*, pp. 485-486.

Purnea Nawab. Saiyad Fakhruddin Hussain succeeded his father Jalil.[1] It was with him that Permanent Settlement was effected.[2]

Fakhruddin Hussain's sons Didar Hussain and Akbar Hussain founded the Khagra and Kishanganj branches of the family respectively. The Kishanganj branch was under the court of Wards from 1874 to 1883. The heirs of this estate Saiyad Dilawar Reza and Saiyad Asghar Reza were unworthy descendants of their ancestors. They rapidly lost all their property which was ultimately acquired by babu Dharam Chand Lal and his son Babu Prithi Chand Lal. The Khagra share was under the court of Wards' management from 1892 to 1900.[3]

[1] Khan, Ghulam Hussain. *Sair-ul-Mutakharin*, Vol. III, p. 142.

[2] Byrne, J. *Final Report on the Survey and Settlement Operation in the District of Purnea*, 1901-1908, p. LI.

[3] Ibid., p. LII.

APPENDIX—D

TIRAKHARDAH ESTATE

Tirakhardah, more popularly known as Banaili Raj, was taken from Morang and given to the family of Purnea Raja, Ramchandra. He gave Tirakhardah and Asja Parganas to his Diwan, Dewanand Choudhary in 1751, who divided the two Parganas between his two sons—Asja to Manikanandan and Tirakhardah to Parmanand. Dular Choudhary, also known as Dular Singh, succeeded his father Parmand and the estate was settled with him in perpetuity. Raja Dular Singh had two sons, Raja Bidyanand Singh and Kumar Rudranand Singh. Raja Bidyanand Singh died in 1851 and was succeeded by his son, Raja Lilanand Singh, who established his seat at Ramnagar. He had three sons, Raja Padmanand Singh, Kumar Kalanand Singh and Kumar Kirtyanand Singh. Raja Padmanand Singh remained at Ramnagar while the two younger Kumars moved to Champanagar also founded by their father. The management of entire property subsequently passed into the hands of Kumars Kalanand Singh and Kumar Kirtyanand Singh. Kumar Kalanand Singh's sons, Kumars Ramanand Singh and Krishnanand Singh founded Garhbanaili and Krishnagarh (Bhagalpur) respectively. Kumar Rudranand Singh's successor moved to Srinagar. The scions of the Champanagar and Shrinagar branches have distinguished themselves in different walks of life in recent times.[1]

[1] O'Malley, L. S. S. *Bengal District Gazetteers-Purnea*—1911, pp. 183-185.

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